

4. Okhrana Agent Dolin

APPROVED FOR RELEASE
CIA HISTORICAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAM
22 SEPT 93

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Gambler against the Russian revolutionaries and wartime double agent with the Germans.

OKHRANA AGENT DOLIN¹

Rita T. Kronenbitter

The provincial branch chiefs of the imperial Okhrana were not required in 1904 to report to St. Petersburg the names and assignments of their informants and secret agents. Only in very exceptional cases did they seek headquarters' advice about some outstanding agent. One such case was that of Ventsion Moiseev-Moshkov Dolin (pronounced *Dallin*). Young Dolin, who had a four years' record of good work as agent and informer but had been on ice for several months, came one day in June that year to his former case officer wanting to be put in prison. What he really wanted, of course, was reemployment; a duly advertised arrest was the almost standard procedure for building cover. The case officer, Captain Shultz, newly appointed chief of the Okhrana branch in Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk), was undecided whether to comply.

Dolin had started as an informer in 1900 while going to school in Zhitomir, west of Kiev. He had worked there for a Colonel Potocki for two years. Potocki had recommended him to Shultz as intelligent and experienced in maintaining effective contacts among the underground leaders of the Jewish Bund, citing a whole series of subversive acts he had been able to prevent thanks to Dolin's timely information. Shultz had soon found for himself how good a man he was, raised his status to that of secret—penetration—agent, and paid him 100 rubles a month, more than any other agent in the area.

Dolin had one serious defect, however, which had been the reason for his dismissal and was why Captain Shultz now consulted headquarters about rehiring him: he was a passionate and incorrigible gambler. Although Shultz had previously warned him that he would have to live modestly and give up gambling, another agent had

¹ This case history is reconstructed principally from files of the Tsarist agency's Paris field station, which the Hoover Institution has now opened to the public. For earlier papers by the author from this source see *Studies* IX 2 and 3, "The Okhrana's Female Agents," Parts I and II.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

57

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

reported watching Bundist agitator Dolin—neither knew the other was an agent—lose heavily at dice at the town club and hearing his comrades speculate about where he got his money. This was just after several subversives close to Dolin had been arrested and people were wondering who betrayed them. So Captain Shultz had felt obliged to dismiss him. He told him to break off with the Bund and go back home to Ostropol, over by Rovno, where his father had a small business.

Applying now for reemployment, Dolin presented his own plan for his future activity. Having had no contact with the Bund for several months, he would formally join the Anarcho-Communists this time; he had already made a number of friends among them. He proposed that after being arrested he should be sent back to Zhitomir for trial and imprisonment so as to make his defiance of the police better known and admired among the subversives. Shultz passed this buck to headquarters, received a go-ahead, worked out the details with Dolin, and proceeded as planned. The agent was taken to Zhitomir and sentenced for certain political offenses someone else had committed.

Counter-terror in the Ukraine

Upon release from prison, Dolin was promptly welcomed into the terrorist underground. He moved back to Ekaterinoslav, which had become an Anarcho-Communist center and transit point for the terrorists. There a series of conspiracies for assassinations and sabotage were nipped short of the point of action as he succeeded in learning of the plans and reporting the movements of underground personnel. Early in 1908 the Okhrana provincial branches were alerted by headquarters against a Jewess named Taratuta, who had taken part in several killings of high officials. Dolin told his case officer, now a Captain Prutensky, that he could finger her for arrest, but it should be worth a bonus of 500 rubles. Headquarters readily approved Prutensky's borrowing the money for this purpose, and Dolin signed a receipt for it in his code name, *Lenin*. Taking extreme care to make it look like a lucky accident, Prutensky bagged Taratuta along with several other conspirators. Dolin himself was among the group, but there seemed to be no evidence to incriminate him this time.

To take off him any possible heat generated by his release, however, Captain Prutensky in August sent Dolin on an exploratory trip to Paris. He knew that the revolutionaries in his Ekaterinoslav area

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

were receiving funds, arms, and guidance from their comrades in France, and he wanted to look into the workings of this supply and communications line. In Paris, Dolin characteristically wired for money: for 400 rubles he could produce the mailing list of the *Burevestnik*, underground publication of the Anarcho-Communists. Prutensky, always short of cash, consulted headquarters and was told it had no interest in a list of Anarcho-Communists abroad but he should offer 200 rubles for the list of those in Russia.

Dolin arrived back in Ekaterinoslav early in September, bringing the mailing list. With its help he was able to spot for his case officer the location of two *Burevestnik* printshops in Russia, several caches of propaganda materials and hidden arms depots, and a detailed plan for the transport of activists and literature into the country. So comprehensive was this information that Prutensky wired for the Police Director's approval for him to bring Dolin to St. Petersburg to discuss it. It affected Okhrana branches all over the Empire, and he realized that such a productive agent should be reporting to headquarters, not his provincial branch at Ekaterinoslav. Headquarters, he suggested, should give Dolin a permanent assignment abroad as a penetration agent.

It happened that the Paris station needed a replacement for its penetration agent among the Anarcho-Communists, a man named Tetelbaum, code name *Yost*, who just a few months earlier had been exposed and killed. Klimovich, the Police Director, was agreeable to Dolin's transfer but wired Prutensky that it should be cleared with station chief Arkady Harting at rue de Grenelle 79, Paris, and gave instructions for secure communication direct with him. The transfer was thus agreed upon, with the provision that Prutensky could retain Dolin in Ekaterinoslav until the end of September for a special job.

Bad Rubles for Good

This job was to locate 8,000 rubles which a combat unit of the Anarcho-Communists had recently "expropriated" from the local state treasury. Dolin learned that the loot had been smuggled to Geneva, and Captain Prutensky promptly sent him there, wiring Harting in Paris in order at the same time to effect the agent's transfer. Harting expressed his delight at having *Lenin* and dispatched his case officer Captain Andreev to Geneva.

Dolin, established in the Geneva group of Anarcho-Communists, attended an underground gathering where they discussed the use of

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

59

4. (Continued)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

the 8,000 rubles. 3,000 of the total was to be allocated back to the Odessa underground to cover the expenses of an operation up the Dniester in Khotin. The plan of this operation was to smuggle in a pile of counterfeit money, 49,000 rubles, and exchange it for genuine banknotes from the state treasury in Khotin with the help of the chief accountant there. As usual in selecting operatives for such risky tasks, the conspirators cast dice, and Dolin won.

He reported the assignment to Captain Andreev, explaining that he could not possibly turn it down. He was to leave on 17 November for Kolomiya in Austrian Galicia, on the border only some 100 kilometers from Khotin. There an elderly woman named Steora Ivanchuk at 90 Starogoncharska had the 49,000 counterfeit rubles in safekeeping. From Kolomiya he was to proceed to Odessa, arriving 21 November, to coordinate with the local underground. There, Captain Andreev now instructed him, he should also contact a Lt. Col. Levdikov, responsible for Okhrana activities in Khotin. Upon receiving the spurious money he would note the serial numbers and report. Case officer and agent discussed the job in minute detail, and Paris spelled out all their arrangements in wires to St. Petersburg.

The operation turned out a complete success for the Okhrana. Chief accountant Malaidach and Anarchist Dudnichko were caught red-handed, ostensibly quite by accident and without a trace of suspicion falling on Dolin, who returned to Geneva on 20 December. Captain Andreev debriefed him there and wired to headquarters the following account:

Arriving in Khotin from Odessa, Lenin contacted through local Anarcho-Communists the accountant of the state treasury and gave him 3,000 rubles of the money taken in the robbery of the Ekaterinoslav state treasury. The accountant agreed to take 16,000 in counterfeit bills in exchange for genuine money. Lenin then returned to Kolomiya in Austria to pick up the 16,000. He came back and delivered the counterfeit notes to a go-between for the accountant, who was promptly taken under surveillance by the agents of the Odessa Branch. Lenin also gave to Lt. Colonel Levdikov a complete list of the Anarcho-Communist group in Khotin. Nine were arrested and much illegal literature confiscated. Lenin returned to Geneva. He was given a reward of 400 rubles.

A year later, in November of 1909, Dolin asked for assignment to Odessa, saying he didn't get along with the Anarcho-Communists in Paris. By the middle of the month the Odessa Okhrana had enough information from *Aleksandrov* (his new code name) to arrest the entire Anarcho-Communist underground there. To play safe,

50

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

however, they included him among the arrested. Dolin himself maintained that he was not under suspicion in connection with these arrests, that the terrorists were convinced another person was the traitor; but he acceded to his case officer's insistence. The case officer promised that at a convenient spot he would be given an opportunity to escape, along with several other prisoners.

The branch chief overruled this plan. An easy escape, even in a group with others, might cause suspicion. Dolin had become too valuable to expose to unnecessary danger. It would be safer to send him with the rest into banishment. On 21 January 1910 he was thus shipped with other exiles to Archangelsk. Soon thereafter he received 500 rubles and a passport in the name of Gregory Solomonovich Gleichsberg. At the end of May he "escaped" to St. Petersburg; a month later he reported in at Odessa. He paid a short visit to his parents, now nearby in Kherson.

Third Start

In July Dolin's case officer supplied him with a passport in the name of Heim Yankel Eisenberg, issued by the Odessa municipal government, and he made an "illegal escape" abroad. He went to Paris, where A. A. Krassilnikov was now in charge and a Colonel Erhardt became Dolin's case officer. He was given the code name *Sharl* (Charles) and placed in Switzerland. Within two months he asked for 2,000 francs, saying he needed it to pay his debts. Erhardt supported the request in a wire to headquarters: "I saw Sharl and he made a very good impression. He is genuine and conscientious. As a penetration among the Anarcho-Communists he is very close to Muzil, Muzil's wife, and others. I value him greatly and recommend approval."

Dolin's salary in Switzerland was 650 francs a month, plus expenses for trips to Paris and London to visit the Anarcho-Communist groups there. Although his operations during this prewar period never included such risky assignments as those in Russia before 1910, the value of his work was never questioned. In one instance he played a curious role in fixing the blame for some arrests he himself had arranged upon the Anarcho-Communists' own chief underground operator.

This was the case of the above-named Muzil, whose life career was that of a terrorist for the Anarcho-Communists. A Czech, at the turn of the century he had organized various bands in the Balkan

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

61

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

countries in support of the Russian revolutionaries. Then he had worked in Galicia and the Prussian parts of Poland as an organizer of border crossings. By 1911 he had moved to London and become a member of the committee of the Anarcho-Communists there. Despite his great services in the past, he came under suspicion as a traitor when it was pointed out that his arrival from Galicia had coincided with the arrest of a whole net of conspirators entering Russia from that province.

The revolutionaries' counterintelligence service in Paris, run by the sometimes overzealous Burtzev, produced information which incriminated Muzil further, so the Anarcho-Communists were obliged to subject him to interrogation and judgment before a secret tribunal. Dolin had by then gained the confidence of the comrades to such a degree that they entrusted him with the investigation and membership on the tribunal. He succeeded in confirming Burtzev's charges and branding Muzil an agent of the Okhrana, thus eliminating him—although vindicated after the revolution as a faithful terrorist—from further conspiratorial work.

Dolin remained in London as one of the leading Anarcho-Communists until 1914, making occasional trips to Switzerland and reporting regularly on the revolutionaries' projects. When the war broke out he wanted to return to Russia, but a sudden opportunity to join the German service as a double agent for the Okhrana launched him on a new career, hitherto little known though one of the Okhrana's most dramatic. The revolutionary writers who have traced his work as a penetration agent among their ranks break off in 1914, purposely omitting his contribution to the Russian national war effort against Germany. His extraordinary achievements in misleading the German service, exposing it, and doing it material damage did not fit into their portrayal of him as a traitor. They only note in conclusion that he committed suicide in Russia when the Communists took over. And that, Valerian Agafonov declares in his book, was too good an end for him.

Bid from Byzantium

The beginnings of Dolin's new venture show up in a number of priority cables exchanged at the end of September 1914 between station chief Krassilnikov in Paris and headquarters. Dolin had attended an underground meeting of the Anarcho-Communists in Switzerland, and afterwards a visiting revolutionary comrade from

62

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Constantinople had introduced himself to him. His name was Bernstein, he said, and he was fully informed of Dolin's great revolutionary merits; a brother in Milan had told him where to find him.

Bernstein had been commissioned by the Turkish government, he said, to recruit a team of revolutionaries to go to Russia and commit three acts of sabotage there. The Turks would pay big money and provide all the required equipment. Targets would be two strategic bridges in central Russia and one in Siberia. Technical details, including the pinpointing of the targets, were to be worked out in Constantinople. There would be a liberal advance allowance, and a 50,000-franc reward would be deposited in a bank. If Dolin was willing to undertake the job, he could select one or two other revolutionaries to go with him to Constantinople to organize the expedition.

Dolin responded favorably with a studied mixture of enthusiasm and caution. He agreed to look for a partner, preferably not Jewish but a fully trusted Russian. Then he reported to Colonel Erhardt, who rushed with the story to chief Krassilnikov. A venture like this had to be approved at headquarters, if only because the Okhrana was supposed to confine itself to work against the revolutionaries. Should Dolin see Bernstein again or not? Should he explore the possibilities of a double-agent operation? Should he go to Constantinople and thence to Russia? Who should be designated to go with him?

The director's reply favored the operation. Dolin should continue the talks and agree to go to Turkey and then Russia. No agent working among the revolutionaries should be made a member of the sabotage team; Dolin's aide should be a staff officer. The two should travel separately to Constantinople, never recognizing each other in public and taking utmost care against possible Turkish surveillance. Their correspondence back should be in secret inks agreed on in advance and signed with female names. If the time and location for entering Russia could not be reported in advance, Dolin should upon arrival wire Vassiliev at 40 Nadezhdinskaia, so that secure contacts could be arranged and the movement of the team watched. Krassilnikov should keep headquarters informed in detail on the operation, including membership of the sabotage team. Could Dolin pick whom he wanted or would the decision be made in Constantinople?

Krassilnikov designated Colonel Erhardt to pose as Dolin's assistant. Erhardt insisted on changing the location for further talks with

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

63

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

Bernstein from Venice, the rendezvous agreed upon, to Rome. It was 4 November before the three met there. Dolin introduced Erhardt as "Tovarishch Mikhail, our chief organizer," and asked Bernstein to repeat his whole proposition to him. Bernstein revealed his disappointment that after this long wait Dolin had not brought the rest of the team so they could all proceed to Constantinople without delay. On the other hand, he was evidently glad for the chance to discuss with a top revolutionary leader further sabotage possibilities that he could propose to his bosses in Constantinople. He thus showed himself to be more than just a spotter and recruiter; in the four days of meetings that followed, he developed all sorts of ideas on likely sabotage targets. He also showed whom he was working for.

The German Hand

Colonel Erhardt had never believed that Bernstein's backers were the Turks, but he did not ask any direct questions. The story came out piecemeal. Bernstein was a civilian supplier for the German military in Constantinople and had much business in the embassy. One of the officials there had asked him to get in touch with the Russian revolutionaries to arrange the blowing up of the bridges on the Volga at Syzrani, on the Yenissei near Krasnoyarsk, and on the railroad line circling Lake Baikal, 50,000 francs to be paid upon completion of the three jobs. That was why he was here. Although he had kept moving while waiting in Italy—as a subject of Turkey, he did not want to attract the attention of the local police—he was nevertheless in steady communication with the German who sent him, and this man was getting impatient.

In the course of the talks Colonel Erhardt let it be seen that he was the one in charge but Dolin was the man to lead the sabotage team. "Why did you say at first that the Turks were behind this proposal? I would like to hear your explanation," the colonel challenged Bernstein. "As an organizer and planner for the revolutionaries, I insist on utmost frankness. We must know where we stand and whose support we can count on." Bernstein explained that he had to mask the offer until he was sure it would be accepted. Now he would be completely frank. The next thing for the three of them to do was to go to Constantinople.

Colonel Erhardt declined to go; his past revolutionary activities had so compromised him in the Balkans, he said, that his mere appearance there would endanger the project. Moreover, he needed to go

4. (Continued)

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

to London to get comrades not only for the three bridge jobs but for the other operations Bernstein's sponsor was anxious to undertake. He had already alerted four persons in London to wait for his personal instructions. As soon as he got there he would send an assistant to Italy to join Dolin for the trip to Constantinople and would also organize a separate sabotage team to be sent to Russia by the northern route; upon arrival in the Empire that team could coordinate its activity with Dolin and his comrade entering direct from Turkey. Thus Bernstein was consoled for the delay by the prospect of an additional sabotage expedition from London.

Before the Rome talks were over the planning was suddenly complicated by Turkey's entering the war on the German side. This would make it impossible to ship the sabotage explosives in from Turkey as planned. Erhardt assured Bernstein that they need not worry about this. The explosives could be procured in Russia; the organized workers at the Yuzovka ammunition plant could be depended upon to provide whatever materials and technicians were needed. On the other hand, it would now be extremely unwise for the Russians to go to Constantinople. The talks with the German boss should therefore be held on neutral soil, say in Salonika.

Bernstein objected that the German official was such an important person that his traveling to Salonika would draw too much attention. He said he had already wired the German embassy to send to the consul at Salonika four German and Turkish passports for the Russians. There should be no problem in visiting Constantinople, he insisted, for the Germans had become the real bosses in Turkey. They left this point open but agreed on immediate moves: Bernstein would go to Brindisi to buy three steamship tickets for Salonika; Dolin would wait in Rome for the arrival of his assistant and the two would join Bernstein in Brindisi; Erhardt would proceed to London to organize the other sabotage team. Bernstein promised to send two thousand pounds for the expenses of this team. Its targets would be three arms plants, the most important of which was one at Bryansk operated by French capital. Awards for these sabotage acts would be decided upon between Dolin and the German.

For his expenses on the return trip to London Bernstein gave Colonel Erhardt 300 francs. Submitting his progress report to Krasnikov in Paris, the colonel attached the banknotes with the comment that he considered them Okhrana property. The large amounts that Dolin was later to get from the Germans would similarly revert to

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

65

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

the Paris station even when for the sake of cover Dolin had to make deposits in his name.

Mission Accomplished

From this point on, action on the part of the Okhrana was rapid. Before returning to Paris to report to Krassilnikov, Colonel Erhardt stopped in Genoa and briefed the case officer, Lt. Colonel Anton Litvin, whom Krassilnikov had dispatched to join Dolin. In Paris he sent a wire to Salonika for delivery to Litvin and Dolin upon arrival saying they should under no circumstances agree to go to Constantinople; the Turks could arrest the conspirators as Russian subjects. Bernstein must persuade the German officer to come to Greece, or the deal would be called off.

Erhardt sent another wire to headquarters asking for operational support: Dolin needed an address in Russia for correspondence with Bernstein; he needed documents that would enable him to move freely in any part of the Empire; around the end of December a newspaper in the capital should carry an item about the criminal sabotage of a railroad bridge without specifying the location. "Since the German embassy in Turkey appears extremely anxious to conceal its initiation and funding of the operations," he wrote, "it would be desirable to have a subsequent news item report that two criminals had been arrested but others could not be found." As in other communications with headquarters, he begged in this one for the utmost in security precautions. Dolin's "movements must be watched at all times and contacts with him maintained in complete clandestinity. This good man has given more than ten years of excellent service with extraordinary achievement. To protect him from exposure must be our heavy personal responsibility."

Litvin arrived in Rome on 9 November and was introduced to Bernstein as Tovarishch Anatoly, operational assistant of Tovarishch Mikhail (Erhardt) and an experienced revolutionary terrorist. The three boarded ship in Brindisi separately and had no open contact with one another on the way. In Salonika, they had no difficulty persuading the German sponsor that they could not go to Constantinople; he agreed to meet them in still neutral Rumania.

The briefing in Bucharest took only two days. Dolin and his partner, it was arranged, would enter Russia from Rumania. The German furnished them passports, Dolin's in the name of René Ralph and Litvin's as Anatoly Linden. He gave them money for travel,

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

supplies, and the pay of revolutionary helpers. To Dolin he gave another ten thousand francs to send to "Tovarishch Mikhail" for the northern team. Dolin was to be the sole channel for communication with Bernstein about both teams' operations, and the German control and direction would likewise all be channeled through Bernstein.

The Okhrana control was, naturally, more complex. Headquarters designated one of its top officials, code name *Orlov*, to run the operation in Russia and coordinate with the elements abroad—~~Krassilnikov~~ in Bordeaux (where the field station had moved on account of the German threat to Paris), Colonel Erhardt with code name *Shpeer* for this operation, the notional group of revolutionary saboteurs in London, and of course Bernstein in Constantinople as the recipient of Dolin's communications. It was *Orlov*, then, that arranged for real but harmless acts of sabotage, saw to it that vague and exaggerated reports of them appeared in the press, and made sure they were leaked to foreign newspapers. Several Paris papers carried short items about dastardly bombings of installations in Russia, complete with dates and worded to suggest truly serious damage.

Emptor Cavet

The German service seemed convinced and gratified by the accomplishments of the sabotage teams in Russia. But when Dolin came back out in March, ostensibly with Litvin (who actually had not stayed in Russia at all), they were instructed through Bernstein to go to Bern to see the German military attaché, Colonel von Bismarck. This officer met with them twice, hearing full reports on how they had sabotaged two bridges and planted a bomb in the Okhta armament factory; and as they were telling him about this last act, he interrupted them angrily:

"That Okhta incident was not sabotage. It was not an explosion intended to do any damage. You are both liars."

When the two protested, Bismarck revealed he had another source of information in Russia who had reported that the Okhta explosion was clearly staged so as to cause no damage to life or property. But Dolin and Litvin stuck to their story, so the attaché promised he would consult his home office for further explanation and a decision on whether to continue the operation. He said he would send for them when he had an answer from Berlin.

Several weeks went by with no word from Bismarck. When Dolin and Litvin then insisted on seeing him again anyway, he said that

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

67

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

since there had been no reply from Berlin he had no choice but to dismiss them. Again he accused them of not being genuinely interested in the work but only wanting to make some dishonest money. When Litvin realized that the German had no suspicion of their double game but only of mercenary rascality, he swelled with feigned anger and disgust, exploding: "You can keep your money; we want no part of it! You can't buy our services. We are revolutionaries! We aren't here to help you or get your pay. What we want is to strike against the tyranny in our country!" Dolin seconded the short speech with convincing vigor.

This act so impressed Colonel von Bismarck that his attitude immediately changed to one of apology. He told them he would send another wire to Berlin at once. In a few days, on 12 June 1915, he invited them to his villa and told them his headquarters had approved resuming the operation. He introduced them to a man he called Franklin A. Giacomini who would thenceforth work with them. Giacomini claimed to be an American citizen who was in sympathy with the German war effort; that was why the German government had asked him to deal with them.

Litvin, as he later reported to headquarters, quickly saw through this purported American. What would an American be doing in the villa of the German military attaché? The man's posture, walk, and general manner showed he must be another German officer.

The three now held a series of meetings without Bismarck. Giacomini said he was going to Petrograd—as an American citizen, he could—and was anxious to meet the revolutionary employee of the Okhta plant who had taken part in sabotaging it. Dolin and Litvin, realizing at once that the object was to check up on their story, said they did not know the man but were sure his name could be obtained from a Dr. Naum Borisovich Liakhovsky at 35 Nevsky, who was an expert in explosives and a trusted revolutionary. Begging Giacomini to be careful not to give the doctor away, they said he could give him their names as "Rekord" and "Ralph" and certify to their concurrence in the inquiry into the factory job.

To the second meeting, on 14 June, Giacomini brought a check for 10,000 francs against the Reichsbank account in the Swiss Federal Bank. He told Dolin to be careful with this money; it was for expenses in several forthcoming operations. One of these was to explode a bomb in the residence of Russian Minister Sazonov; another bomb was to be planted in the Putilov ammunition works; and several

58

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

were to be set off in coal mines in the Donets basin. Giacomini asked Dolin to prepare a list of strategic locations where he would recommend other acts of sabotage.

At the last meeting before Giacomini's departure, Dolin and Litvin briefed him on procedure and passwords for making contact with Dr. Liakhovsky. Litvin himself would go to Petrograd and would be staying at the Severnaia Hotel in case he was needed. After the meeting Litvin wired headquarters Giacomini's personal description, his expected arrival date of 28 or 29 June, and the information that he was as familiar as a native with Petrograd. The Dr. Liakhovsky he would contact was of course an Okhrana agent, but not knowing how far the Okhrana directorate would want to carry the game with him, Litvin requested that an agent be placed in the Okhta plant to pose as the revolutionary who had helped sabotage it.

More Dastardly Bombs

Dolin deposited the check for projected operations in the Russian Asian Bank in Zurich and left for Paris. Here it was agreed that he would join Litvin in London and accompany him back to Russia. Then headquarters, oddly, objected to his going back in on the German assignments. Wires were bounded back and forth, Krassilnikov insisting he must go lest he be blown to the Germans, and also to the revolutionaries through Bernstein. In the end he was in Petrograd again by the middle of July.

Dolin's job was quite simple this time. He only had to brief a headquarters case officer on everything the Germans had instructed him to do and let the Okhrana stage the explosions or otherwise simulate the sabotage. A bomb exploded in the mansion of Minister Sazonov, just as the Germans had prescribed. It was no dud, but it was used in such a way as to cause minimal damage to the property. In sequel, the Okhrana directorate cabled to the chief in Paris:

Find ways in the French press, without revealing source, to publish the following note: "A large bomb exploded in the mansion of one of the chiefs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. One servant received wounds and a section of the mansion is in ruins. The perpetrator escaped."

Put varied versions of this item in different newspapers.

A similar cable eight days later gave the text for a news item about a bomb explosion in one of the major mines of the Donets coal basin. It said the damage would stop production for a considerable length of time, that several people had been arrested, and that the

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

69

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

authorities were conducting a thorough investigation. Another dated 8 August requested a story in the French press of how an armed man simulating insanity broke into the Bureau of Foreign Affairs intending to kill the Minister. Only the Deputy, Neratov, was present, and employees overpowered and disarmed the assassin. Investigation proved that a group of conspirators was behind the attempt. Paris Okhrana was not to discuss this with the ambassador; it was a planned incident essential in *Sharf's* operation.

Publicity for acts of sabotage and attempted assassinations stretched on through several months of 1915. Each simulated incident had to be realistic enough to convince any German observer on the spot. But Franklin Giacomini was not available for verification in depth. After he had contacted Dr. Liakhovsky and been left at liberty long enough to report to the German service his verification of Dolin's story, he disappeared. He was probably last seen with a group of "revolutionaries," friends of the man in the Okhta plant who had helped Dolin sabotage it.

The Germans now no longer doubted that Dolin was their man. His reputation as an extraordinarily successful German agent in Russia grew with each press report of sabotage; through him they controlled these teams of saboteurs inspired by revolutionary purposes. It was an important and costly enough operation that Colonel von Bismarck took charge of it personally, receiving and briefing Dolin on each of his visits from Russia to Bern. Up through February 1916 the military attaché kept giving him the bank drafts that duly found their way to Paris Okhrana.

Switch to Psywar

At one of their meetings, about the first of March 1916, Colonel von Bismarck sounded out Dolin about undertaking the promotion of German-directed psychological warfare in Russia. The various underground cells among factory workers and in urban neighborhoods which Dolin had described as his instruments for carrying out sabotage could perhaps now be even more useful in spreading defeatist propaganda. Dolin cautiously admitted there might be possibilities for mounting a far-flung campaign, at first strictly underground, then more open, with the major theme of ending the war with Germany and overthrowing Tzarism. Avoiding any untoward display of his own interest, he obliquely led Bismarck to see immense potential in

70

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

a well-directed propaganda program. Bismarck then asked him whether he would undertake the job.

Dolin said he would have to study the offer. His whole career, he said, had been with the Russian underground's campaign of terror and sabotage; he had no experience in agitation and propaganda. The colonel would have to give him guidance. It would be helpful to know what psychological efforts had already been made and how effective they were judged to be. He was sure that all the underground cells he had contacts with would be anxious to cooperate, but they would have to be coordinated with any other existing assets and channels for pro-German propaganda in Russia. He would need a comprehensive view of the whole psywar plan.

During the rest of March and early April Bismarck personally undertook to prepare Dolin for his new job as director of the German propaganda program in Russia. In his briefings Dolin learned about a number of German operations hitherto unknown to the Russian services. Early in May he went to Russia to get the project going. As the dispatches reveal, he was again under constant Okhrana observation and given guidance and covert support for the purpose of convincing the Germans that he and his comrades in the underground cells were assiduously waging psychological warfare for them. This was another costly operation for the Germans, who regularly deposited funds in the Swiss banks to pay the purported warriors.

Came the Revolution

Dolin's case officer Colonel Erhardt had died in a Bordeaux hospital in May 1915, and his substitute case officer and partner in notional sabotage operations Litvin had been assigned to England to handle a group of agents engaged in wartime counterespionage. Station chief Krassilnikov had thus for some time now acted as Dolin's case officer. They frequently met, in various places in Paris, before and after the meetings with Bismarck. Their last encounter was in January 1917, when Dolin left for Russia on his final German assignment. He was about to lose his greatest gamble. The Okhrana files contain no further record of him.

Agafonov, in mentioning Dolin's suicide, does not say just when it occurred. It is known that the investigative commission sent by the provisional government to Paris in June 1917 made an intense search of the records of his double-agent role. Petrograd specifically requested this in February 1918 and was sent a report of the findings on

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

71

4. (Continued)

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

Okhrana Agent

the eve of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations. It is conceivable that such a report could have been of use to the Bolshevik delegation discussing the armistice terms.

One striking aspect of this double-agent operation was the extreme confidence the Germans placed in Dolin. In the spring of 1915, when Dolin and Litvin were charged by Bismarck with deception, they took particular care to check whether they were being followed or investigated. They were never able to detect a thing. And so through 1915 and 1916, making his Okhrana contacts in Switzerland, Paris, or London, Dolin kept on guard but could find no hint of any effort to check up on him. The Germans apparently entertained no suspicion whatever after the Bismarck challenge and only learned at Brest Litovsk that their Dolin was not theirs.

The Okhrana stated its rationale for running Dolin as a double agent in the initial communications after the Germans offered to recruit him. The same reasoning was repeated in the dispatches reporting Bismarck's proposals for psychological warfare. The Germans, the argument went, would run or try to run sabotage operations and propaganda activities with or without Dolin. Consequently it would pay to let them engage Dolin and his notional underground cells, and do everything possible to convince them that he was performing efficiently. Happy with his success, they would put less effort into other such missions. The double operation would also give the Okhrana regular information on the enemy's intentions, methods, and program. It could at the same time help uncover any other German operations.

All these arguments were fully vindicated in the course of the operation, and Dolin's commendations from his chiefs at home and abroad were well deserved.

72

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~