

STALIN'S AGENTS IN WASHINGTON

by TRIS COFFIN

ONLY FOUR blocks from the White House, a grim castle of champagne and conspiracy glowers on Washington. It is a stone mansion, four high-ceilinged floors tall, strewn with chandeliers, ballrooms, scarlet drapes and a stealthy silence.



A generation ago an ambitious hostess built this castle to impress Washington society. Today, it is the heart of a fantastic intrigue against the United States, for it so happens that 1125 Sixteenth Street, N.W., is the Embassy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

Behind the thick stone walls is a topsy-turvy world where the Ambassador, a cold, dour-faced, balding man, is afraid of his chauffeur, where each of the 39 accredited officials and 48 men and women employees has a secret mission that must be hidden from the others, where American Communists are treated with open scorn.

Strangers passing by the Embassy see a big black limousine parked in the curved drive. Twin magnolia trees stand on either side of the proud doorway. A formal garden is



glimpsed behind ornate iron fences. Expensive curtains discreetly cover the long windows. People come and

go casually. A heavy-set Russian in a dark suit strolls toward the Statler Hotel a block south. A shapeless woman clerk in dowdy dress comes out and basks in the sun. They speak to no one, however, for the Embassy staff, surrounded by MVD (secret) police, is cut off from contact with the "bourgeois ideology" of the outside world.

Nevertheless, inside this incongruous "castle," where our capitalist economy is held in contempt and where the hosts at lavish parties belittle the U. S. in every breath, the Reds use American products almost exclusively, from their clothes to the TV sets in their apartments.

Any visitor who enters the Embassy is struck by a strange, unreal atmosphere. It is, in the words of a literary-minded butler who sometimes serves at Embassy parties, "a combination of Dostoevski, William Faulkner and Al Capp."

"Every place you go," he says, "a heavy-browed MVD agent with

folded arms and suspicious eyes follows you. When they unlock the serving silver, you'd think it was the Czar's crown jewels.

"The tips depend on how drunk the paymaster is. If he is partly sober and decides by some queer reasoning that you are sneering at him, not a dime. But if he is full of vodka and likes you, he will hug you like a bear and stuff bills in your pocket."

Recently, a Washington reporter was invited to the Embassy through a go-between, a writer with contacts among the Cominform diplomatic corps. The reporter went to the Chancery, a small, inconspicuous building attached to the Embassy by a passageway, and rang the bell. It sounded like a lonely cry as it echoed down the hall. A silence, then a scurrying of feet.

The door opened a suspicious crack and an elderly woman wearing a shawl surveyed the visitor with a frightened look. Reluctantly she let the reporter into the Chancery and fled for a frantically whispered conversation in Russian with an unseen person.

The reporter was then greeted by a handsome, black-haired man in his late thirties, who spoke excellent English. The visitor was led through the Embassy over thick red carpets. The silence was so heavy that the sound of a door closed on another floor was like the crack of a pistol.

Baggy dust-covers hid the furniture. Half-opened doors gave a view of immense drawing rooms where cupids and bowknots decorated the molding. A magnificent curving stairway led to the upper first floor. At the head of the stairs was a portrait of the storming of the Winter Palace at Petrograd in 1917.

The upper floor contained a mirrored and paneled hall, lined with office doors. Inside, the offices were shabby and run-down. The dials of the intercom system were in Russian characters.

The half-hour interview was polite but bewildering. The diplomat merely smiled when asked questions, and failed to give any hint as to why the visitor was invited to this private talk. The reporter is still baffled by the incident.

The same curious atmosphere surrounds Embassy inmates when they go into the outside world. Not long ago, an Embassy couple visited the Washington apartment of a former American diplomat who had met the Soviet attaché in Moscow.

EARLY IN THE EVENING, the couple displayed the usual Russian stiffness among strangers. "This summer is most hot and uncom-

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fortable here," said the attaché. "It is *much* better in Russia!"

His wife, obviously under instructions to say little, was shy and uneasy. Wistfully, she mentioned that this was her first venture outside the small Soviet circle in the Capital. She admired the furniture, the pictures, the gleaming kitchen. Plainly she was fascinated by this glimpse of life amidst "capitalistic luxury." But every time she mentioned her delight, her husband dutifully added: "It is *much* better in Russia!"

Finally the discussion drifted to the Soviet Embassy. Then, suddenly, the Russian wife burst out: "*Nenavizhu kak tur'mu!*"

The Soviet attaché turned pale. The host, who knew Russian, realized that she had said: "I hate that place like a jail!"

The comparison is an apt one. The "inmates" are watched day and night by their jailers, the secret police. At least two sets of agents keep a jealous eye on the entire staff. Everyone is suspect. The greatest crime is to be needlessly friendly with an American.

Recently, an Embassy secretary met up accidentally with a young Washington couple. The husband was in college, the wife worked as a researcher in a Federal bureau.

One day the secretary was called in by the Embassy's espionage director, who demanded: "What useful information are you obtaining from your friends, the Joneses?"

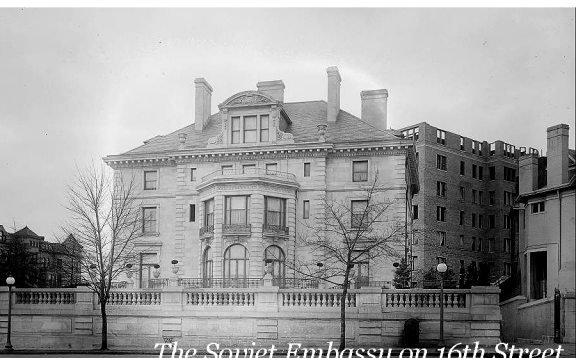
The secretary had known for days that he must face this question, so he was prepared. "You know, of course, that Mr. Jones is seemingly a student. But in reality he is a counter-intelligence agent, assigned to watch two scientists engaged in secret work on solar rays. The Americans are developing a weapon more terrible than the A-bomb!"

The Superman explanation was quite plausible to the espionage chief. And to this day, fictitious but absorbing data on U. S. solar-ray research is to be found in the archives of the MVD in Moscow.

Such cloak-and-dagger business is accepted routine for Embassy officials. Everyone there, from cook to counselor, doubles as a staff worker and as a Communist agent.

The Ambassador's chauffeur, for example, drives His Excellency Georgy N. Zarubin, but he is also a bodyguard and house detective at social functions. More important, he relays secret reports on the behavior of the Ambassador and other high officials to secret-police headquarters in Moscow.

No one, not even a cook's helper, is sent to the castle on Sixteenth

*The Soviet Embassy on 16th Street*

Street unless he has been approved by three, often four agencies, not mentioned above a whisper. They are: the dread MVD; the Foreign Department of the Communist Party Central Committee (it controls undergrounds and key cells throughout the world); the Ministry of State Security's Foreign Department (counter-intelligence); and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Espionage in the Ministry of the Armed Forces.

Once selected, the prospective diplomat is groomed for his conspiratorial role. A Soviet engineer, for example, is trained intensively in guided missiles; he must be able to recognize technical details and ask the right questions.

Former Ambassador Alexander S. Panyuskin, according to a former Soviet officer now in Washington, is an old hand at military intelligence. His real Embassy job was to supervise the gathering of high-level information on U. S. preparedness by a vast network of satellite diplomats, American Communists and sympathizers. Zarubin, who replaced him in June, left his previous post in London amid disclosures that his Second Secretary had been engaged in espionage. Earlier, Zarubin had been relieved of his post in Canada, following the arrest there of the leaders of a Soviet atomic spy ring.

Before the agent leaves Moscow, he is called to the Central Committee for two weeks of "shake-down" training. He is coached in intrigue—who his contacts will be in Washington, how to use them, how to cover his steps, how to report to the home office.

On the last day, the diplomat's Party card is collected and replaced with another identifying him as a member of the "Smolensk Labor Committee" or some such innocuous body. Since the Comrade packed off to Washington might be tempted by "bourgeois ideology," his wife and children are sometimes kept in Russia as hostages. In such cases, the Washington diplomatic list conspicuously notes "absent" below the family names.

WHEN THE NEWCOMER arrives in Washington, he soon learns that

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the Ambassador is not the real boss. One outside diplomat who has contacts with the Embassy declares: "Always, there is someone in the Embassy whom the others fear. They live in terror of him, for he is the real leader. And he is not the Ambassador. I have seen Soviet officials actually tremble when he comes into the room."

Currently, this key man is Yuri V. Novikov, who ranked 26th on the Embassy staff in the diplomatic list. One of his pawns was Valentin Gubitchev, Soviet engineer who was ordered to woo Judy Coplon, the "political analyst" of the U. S. Justice Department.

At Gubitchev's trial, Novikov threw off his mask in the hunt for big game. He sat at the counsel table and passed notes openly to the defendant's lawyer. But he was not concerned with Gubitchev's fate. Novikov was trying to force the FBI into the open. He wanted to learn the FBI sources, its methods, and how much it knew of Soviet spying. Novikov did his job so well that he was rewarded during a recent visit to Moscow.

The embassy's air of conspiracy hangs over even the dazzling social functions held amidst the gilded magnificence of the second floor (the third and fourth floors are offices and living quarters). Here are five ballrooms with fluted columns and glittering chandeliers. The big affair, the annual reception on the anniversary of the Communist seizure of power in Russia, is the most lavish fete in Washington.

A thousand visitors edge past tables laden with delicacies. Caviar and sturgeon are flown from Russia for the occasion. Liquors of all kinds flow freely. Embassy officers are conspicuous in gleaming white uniforms, loaded with gold braid.

The river of champagne and liquor comes cheaply, for, thanks to diplomatic immunity, the Embassy does not have to pay the Federal liquor tax. Champagne that would cost the American \$8 a bottle is provided for the Russians' propaganda parties at less than \$3, and a case of Scotch at only \$25.

The list of visitors exposes the conspiracy. Those who receive engraved cards with a golden hammer and sickle are mostly diplomats from nations which Russia is courting, Americans whom the Embassy is trying to impress, fellow-travelers and domestic Communists. The latter two groups, however, are treated as poor cousins, and are lucky if they can slide past the Embassy guards for a second go at the

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champagne.

The important guests are in the second group, for they give clues to the Embassy's undercover activities. One year these special guests are atomic scientists, another year Hollywood script writers, and still another year, professors and racial leaders who may be induced to sign such bogus documents as the Stockholm "Peace Appeal."

A smiling attaché fawns at the elbow of each privileged guest. "Another glass of champagne, sir? We are very much honored to have such a distinguished and understanding guest."

The Embassy stages three other kinds of social affairs—the propaganda show, the intimate dinner, and the uninhibited, shoes-off binge.

The first opens with a screening of Soviet movies in a drawing room for some 100 guests, including a large percentage of wide-eyed Americans. One recent guest gruffly commented:

"Unfortunately, I forgot to eat before we came to the Embassy at 7 o'clock. I sat for four hours, with my chair getting harder and my appetite growing stronger. We saw films of the May Day parade and a full-length feature on the life of Mussorgsky, the Russian composer. Every time Stalin's face showed on the screen, the satellite diplomats and American Communists applauded furiously."

An intimate dinner for ten was described recently by the ranking diplomat of a country being wooed by the Soviet: "The food was the most expensive served in any Washington embassy. There were twenty or thirty different kinds of liquors. Our host held the conversation to a comparison between the United States and Russia. Whenever a guest praised anything American, our host remonstrated: 'Yes, but it is *much* better in Russia!'

"However, I noticed that he was wearing an American suit, while his wife's dress came from Washington's most expensive store. The first thing the Russians do when they accumulate dollars is buy American clothing and TV sets.

"After dinner, we danced to a phonograph. Yes, the machine and the records were American!"

A few times a year, especially after the monster reception, the Embassy closes its doors and the more than 200 members of the Soviet community in Washington let down their hair. Tables are set in one of the ballrooms, and the tax-free liquor is brought in. What follows has been described as the wildest goings-on in Washington.

Experienced private waiters want nothing to do with these parties. As one of them explained: "The brawls are too rough. You're likely to get knocked downstairs by a playful Russian full of vodka. They drink like crazy men. A brandy snifter filled to the rim with vodka goes down in one gulp. When you go back to the Embassy next morning to clean up, the place is littered with broken dishes and glasses, furniture that looks like it was kicked to pieces, and bits of clothing."

The first hour or so is a riotous eating and drinking contest with much singing, laughter and shouts of "*Hoi, hoi, hoi!*" Then some of the younger men compete in energetic folk dances. A few land on the floor, to the accompaniment of laughter. The winner downs a glass of vodka with a gesture.

From then on, the party really gets going. Men with bottles sticking from their pockets lurch through the halls in clumsy but determined pursuit of the few women present. Attire is anything but formal. Fist fights are not uncommon. Later, in corners and along the curving stairway, figures sprawl, some in snoring sleep, others with arms around their ladies.

Discipline is restored the morning after. The Soviet diplomat comes out the door, again the stiff, arrogant individual fighting his private war against the "capitalist exploiters" of the United States. This defensive attitude was clearly revealed in the case of the assistant military attaché and his war against the District traffic bureau.

The colonel was bolder than most of his Embassy comrades, who shy from the stiff District driving tests. When he flunked his first trial, he roared, "I cannot fail fairly!"

When he returned for the fourth test, he climbed behind the wheel with superb confidence. But by the time he and the haggard inspector came back, the Russian had achieved a record—123 demerits.

He was charged with failure to observe other traffic, exceeding the speed limit, failure to yield right of way to pedestrians, delayed braking, failure to give proper signals, turning corners too wide, failure to get into the correct turning lane, and seven other misdeeds.

When the colonel was told he had failed again, he cried in rage: "Impossible! This is discrimination against a Soviet citizen!"

It is ironic that an employee of the Soviet Embassy should use the word "discrimination," especially when his lot is compared to that of the staff of the U. S. Embassy in Moscow. There, Americans lead a

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harsh and secluded life. They are cut off from contacts with the population; their mail is opened, their telephones tapped. The Ambassador is followed everywhere by two Red agents in a car. The staff lives mostly out of food supplies sent from the U. S., since so little can be purchased in Russia.

Meanwhile, in Washington, the official agents of the most totalitarian dictatorship on earth enjoy all the benefits of our democratic society. This includes the right to come and go as they choose, diplomatic immunity from traffic cops, access to our people and government, and, above all, the free air.

Perhaps their antagonism toward the United States would be laughable if the Soviet Embassy were merely a Hollywood movie prop. But it is not a prop; it is the headquarters of a sinister conspiracy against the peace and welfare of the Western World. No wonder many American citizens ask why our own representatives in Moscow cannot receive the same treatment and privileges that are enjoyed by the Soviet's agents—only four blocks from the White House.



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