

# THE INNER WORKINGS OF THE RUSSIAN POLICE SYSTEM

## A Modern Genghis Khan Holds the Reins of Government in the Land of the Czar.

By Kurt Aram  
THIRD ARTICLE

It was once prophesied by Alexander Herzen that as soon as the telegraph reigned in Russia there would arise a Genghis Khan to make use of it. The prophecy has since come true. The Russian police is this modern Genghis Khan with the telegraph, and to this instrument of torture the telephone has now been added.

Genghis Khan, as everyone knows, was the most successful Mongolian despot of all Asia. The Russian police has become just such an Asiatic tyrant, only in much greater degree, for it has at its disposal all the resources of modern technical inventions.

Czars have been forced to pay their

bedridden to this day. All this was public knowledge, and the offenders were publicly punished, but in spite of it, Asev remained for some time "the Czar's protector."

Genghis Khan plus the telephone! But to look a little more closely into the organization of this police. As it is complicated enough, and enveloped in sufficient secrecy to render it almost incomprehensible, we must confine ourselves to a few principal points, which even in Russia are no secret.

At the head of the entire police stands the home secretary, who might more correctly be called minister of police, for all Russian politics end in police politics, and the government is at bottom nothing but a police government, with only here and there the feeblest attempt to disguise the fact. The home secretary is chief of the general as well as of the "special" police, as the latter is called today—the term "political police" is too bald!

As chief of the general police, the home secretary has strings on all the



Special Recognition for "the Czar's Protector"

tribute to time, and have passed away; even home secretaries have had to submit to the eternal law of change. The police system of Russia alone is the same as it was a century ago; it seems in truth to be a thing immortal. Even at the times when the very foundations of Russia seemed to tremble it has stood firm and unshaken. No matter what happens, whether it results in injury to the cause of the government or to the cause of the people—either way it always turns out to the advantage of the Russian police.

As far back as Alexander I this system was in fair working order. On December 27, 1825, occurred the insurrection of the Decabristes—an event which shook the whole empire. The only result for the police was a marked strengthening of their power. How poorly versed were the police at that time in the art of hanging! Three leaders of the insurrection had to be hanged twice. The art has vastly improved since then!

When Alexander II was assassinated, the whole gigantic empire trembled. The police alone lost its footing for not a single moment. Moreover, through the Count Ignatiev and with the help of the head of the police department, Plehve, and a public prosecutor, this assassination produced for the police system its most cruel and effective weapon, the "rule of increased supervision" by which the whole of Russia up to this day has been held in bondage. A fomenting discontent cost a czar his life; it put into the hands of the police, however, its deadliest weapon.

### "Make an End to Education"

When Alexander III replied to Count Deljanov's report with the famous words, "Make an end to education!" the police did not hesitate for a moment to carry out this order. It was then that the disgraceful degree was issued against women students abroad, by which they were placed on the same level as prostitutes.

It was at this time that the police establishment became truly omnipotent—a law unto itself. Since then it has not hesitated to deliver grand dukes and ministers to the scaffold, if by so doing it could serve its own special purposes. Thus, the chief of police, Sudjeikin, did all in his power to persuade the terrorist, Degajev, that he and his friends should murder Minister Tolstol and the Grand Duke Vladimir. Sudjeikin thus calculated to have a reason for attacking the secret terrorist organization with all the means at his command, to become minister himself, and prove to be the czar's only trustworthy protector.

Degajev, in a state of drunkenness, told this excellent plan to a friend, who thereupon placed before him the pleasant alternative of killing Sudjeikin or being himself killed. Degajev murdered Sudjeikin and fled to America.

Furthermore, it was Asev, the police spy, who dressed up two revolutionaries in officers' uniforms and stationed them in the anteroom of the president of the council, Stolypin. We know, for the rest, that the bomb these two had brought burst at the wrong moment, that Stolypin remained unharmed, while his two innocent children were fatally wounded and are

administrations of the empire, beginning with the governor-general. And he keeps his thumb on the so-called self-governing administrations as well, from the largest "zemstvo" to the smallest "mir" in the most remote little village. He accomplishes all this by the help of police officials, who are members of the system even though they occasionally bear no official title. This is for the express purpose of preventing self-government—the great hope of liberal Russia—from becoming in any degree comfortably established.

The relations between the home secretary and the "special" police on the other hand, have not developed in the same simple fashion. Officially, the home secretary is chief of the "special" police also, and as such has the huge corps of policemen, commanded by subalterns, at his disposal. As a matter of actual fact, however, the "special" police constitutes a separate police department of its own, with its own special chief. In time of disturbance, this chief of the "special" police department in St. Petersburg is undoubtedly the most powerful man in Russia—in fact, he is her actual ruler.

But when has Russia been so free from internal disturbances as in the last hundred years? Consequently, the following situation has arisen. If the chief of the "special" police happens to be a powerful personality, then the home secretary can exercise practically no influence on the police department, which is the department that rules Russia. If, on the other hand, the home secretary chance to be the stronger personality, then the chief of police, together with the entire tremendous machine at his disposal, must submit to the secretary's desires.

But who, in a state which verges on absolutism, can be considered as the man who is prepared to fight any danger that may threaten absolutism in the most thorough-going fashion. In such a state, the more powerful personality is always identical with the more unscrupulous, the more violent man.

### Will Kill Kindness

If the home secretary be such a man, then he will straightway suppress any chance humane feelings that might arise in the heart of the chief of police. If, on the contrary, the home secretary should show a tendency to harbor some of the more tender emotions, the chief of police, aided and abetted by the vast machine which lies ready to his hand, promptly nips such a tendency in the bud.

Perhaps it is now not so difficult to understand why the police system in Russia always has remained firm, even when the government tottered, always ready to be able to pursue its own ends regardless of all else. From the point of view of absolutism, the ideal condition would be for the home secretary and the chief of police to go hand in hand. It did work that way under Plehve. But that a humane attitude should arise simultaneously on each side is something which Russia has not, to date, experienced.

Is Not Answerable. If the home secretary represents the responsible government for all internal Russian affairs, then the chief of police represents an irresponsible



The "Faithful Russians" Supporters of the Czar.



Munster von Plehve.

side government, answerable to none, which, however, always has access to the czar, and, as we have seen, possesses an especial influence through the columns of the "czar's newspaper," for which the home secretary acts merely as a postman.

A naive, non-Russian mind might query: Why does a minister at the head of a responsible administration submit to this irresponsible, independent side government? Why does he not remove it?

Well, in an absolute state, this medley of responsible central government and irresponsible side government means a most fortunate condition of affairs. If anything too outrageous happens in the home secretary's department, so that even foreign countries get a bit unpleasant about it, then the police department is made answerable, and the home secretary is able to wash his hands of the whole affair before the entire world.

And if a legal examination of the outrage becomes unavoidable, then the threads that run from the ministry to the police department, and from the police department back to the ministry, are, without any particular effort, entangled to such a degree that no one is able to find the way out of the labyrinth. The side government has always proved in any contingency the minister's best rear guard. Neither has the chief of police any occasion for anxiety, for not being responsible to anyone, nothing can happen to him. His position would be in genuine danger only when he might chance to have a more humane or more sensible idea than the home secretary.

But a chief of police who values his position will scrupulously avoid having such ideas. Once, however, this occurred, it was in the person of an exceptional chief of police who not only had a humane, sensible idea, but wished to carry it out, was Lopuchin. The provocative activity of police spies who spare neither grand dukes nor ministers in order to win for themselves the halo that goes with being the sole reliable "protectors of the czar" seemed to him not only unreasonable but criminal.

In order to stop the machinations of these spies, he put himself into secret communication with Burzov at Paris, the well-known specialist in the hunting down of those whose activities are of a dangerously provocative nature. But Lopuchin was betrayed and a lawsuit was opened up against him.

He explained his intentions, but to the Home Secretary it seemed so absurd for a chief of police to entertain a genuinely humane motive that it was concluded on the face of it that Lopuchin must have been making common cause with the revolutionaries.

He Was Sent to Siberia. The result was that Lopuchin, until then the all-powerful chief of police, was banished to Siberia. Only in consequence

of the last amnesty was he permitted to return to his home, for in the meantime the government had been forced to admit that it had wronged him. But no chief of police in Russia will allow himself again to be caught with a sensible idea! Vestigia terrent!

As has been said, the Home Secretary stands at the head of the general police. The institution that in the hierarchy of the police is nearest to him is that of the chief governors. This institution was founded principally for the suppression of rebellions, and bears the unmistakable stamp of the police system.

The general government was split into a number of minor governments, and the governors of these are nominated by the czar, on the Home Secretary's advice. Of what sort are these governors? Educated men, perhaps? Prince Urussov, who was governor of Bessarabia immediately after the world-famous pogrom of Kishinev, gave the following description of a meeting of governors at St. Petersburg, with Plehve in the chair:

Then the chairman requested the governors to give their opinions on the reports just heard. Involuntarily a picture of my schooldays arose before my eyes. If we expected the teachers to call upon us, we crouched down our eyes, we crouched down before the boys in front of us, we did everything in order to escape observation.

Alas! Among these grown-up schoolboys the czar pupil, who was all ready to answer any question, was missing. Every one remained attentively silent and it was in vain that Plehve glanced at us with an amiably encouraging smile.

Since nobody spoke, he talked for some time with his neighbor Stjuschinski, then apparently lost his patience, uttered the name, no doubt intentionally, of one of the governors present, and without looking at him, expressed a desire to hear his opinion.

X. X. who on account of deafness

understood what was being said to him only by watching the speaker's lips, was innocently occupied in making a drawing. He sat directly opposite Plehve, and did not at all notice his invitation to speak, only interrupting his occupation after his neighbor had pulled his sleeve.

Some time elapsed before he comprehended what was taking place. Then he pulled a solemn face and said that first of all the shaft horses must be considered. We all of us knew that X. X. was the owner of a very famous stud, and could not quite make up our minds about this apparently inept declaration.

It turned out, however, that X. X. had the chairman of future councils in mind, the fortunate choice of whom, in his opinion, guaranteed success to the work in hand. We were unable to get any further with our project and Plehve hastily asked us to tea in the next room.

Not even tea, however, sufficed to animate the governors. Plehve grew sick of this sort of "exchange of opinions," and gave the chair to his

"secret instructions," the chief contents of which were published by Peter Struve in his periodical *Osvobodjenje*, (Liberation).

Doubtless our especial attention must be given to the discovery and pursuit of all attempts to promulgate evil doctrines whose object it is to undermine the most important foundations of the state, society, and family. Every new appearance of this sort must be carefully watched and at once brought to the notice of the proper authorities, even when by so doing no definite information can be gained. In consequence, the following are the objects of continual police supervision:

First, the schools and all public lectures, in order to understand their tendencies and to become acquainted with any suspicious persons.

Second, the book market, especially the retail market, reading rooms, and all similar institutions that might further the sale of dangerous or criminal books.

Third, all persons who travel about for the purpose of making any col-

lection of disturbances of all kinds, and can punish disobedience by a fine of 500 rubles, or imprisonment to a maximum of three months. How this power is abused can be judged from the Ministerial report of January 11, 1905.

Not less frequent are the cases of administrative rules of punishment under the order for increased supervision, even when the orders of the governors and town heads relate to infringements which have nothing whatever to do with suppression of disturbances, as, for instance, driving too fast in the streets, disregard of sanitary regulations, etc.

This means that governors and town heads are permitted to treat a harmless cabdriver who drove faster than they like, as a state criminal, or to consider a miserable shopkeeper whose nose did not please them as the czar's future murderer on the pretext, for instance, that his shop did not live up to sanitary regulations!

Under the rule of "increased supervision," furthermore, the police are at liberty to stop all meetings, even in private houses, to close down shops and factories without notice, to punish with a maximum of three months' imprisonment, to instigate searches in houses without the slightest justification, to forbid any one against whom they have a grudge, domicile in any district, and to place any one they choose under police surveillance for five years!

In this state of "increased supervision" in which a third of European Russia now finds herself every Russian is the helpless prey of the police, for there is no instance to which he can appeal for protection against this tyranny.

And who orders this state of "increased supervision"? The same authority that carries it out, namely, the police through its ministers. And side by side with this flourishes the institution of "administrative banishment" without legal procedure, which is so notorious the whole world over that I do not need to waste words upon it here.

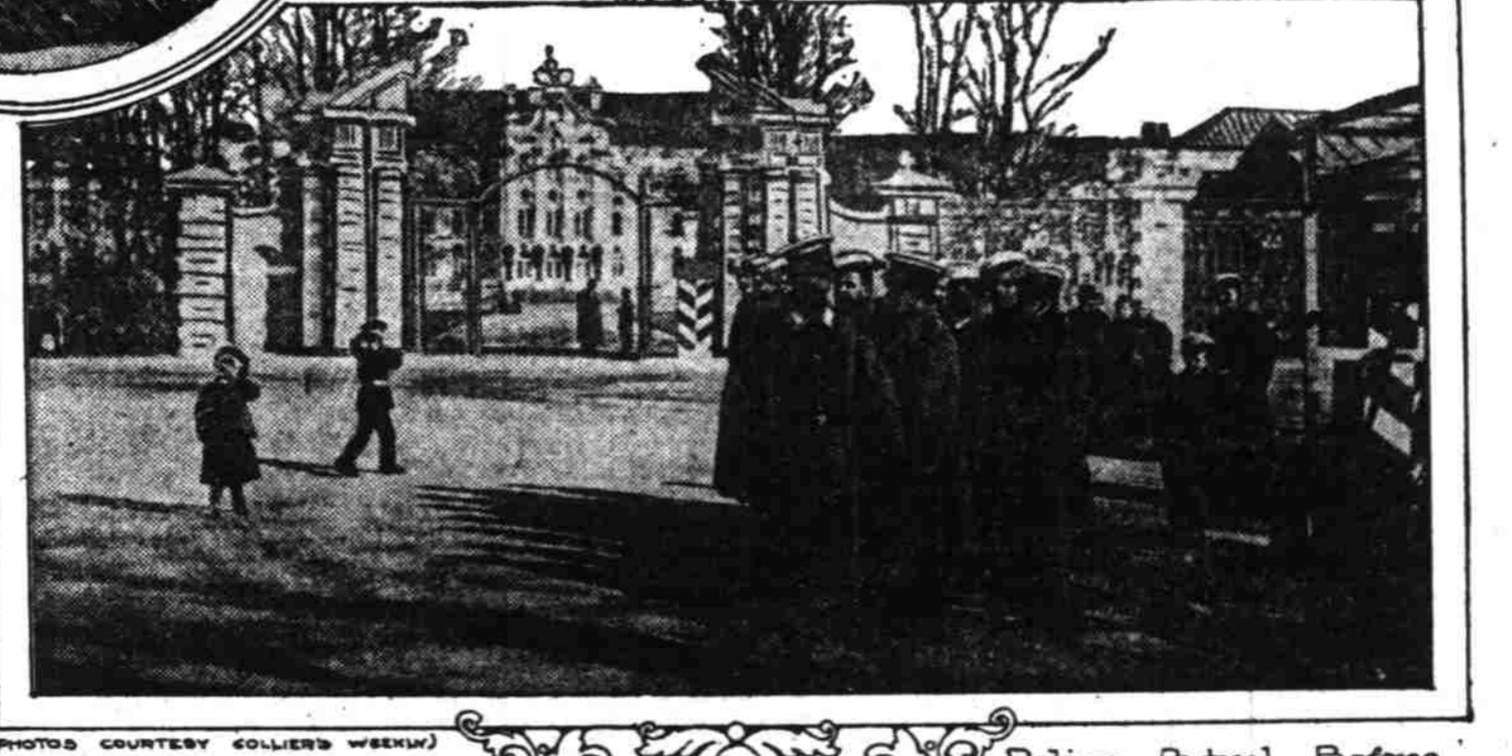
But all this is not sufficient for the police. Just as the "general" police organizes stablemen for its ends, so the "special" police protects every organization of rowdies that is directed against movements toward liberty of any sort. Thus President of the Council Stolypin reported to the czar that the League of Faithful Russians in Odessa, of which the czar is an honorary member, and the badge of which he occasionally wears, consists nearly 60 per cent of criminals, and that scarcely one and one-half per cent of the members could be called educated. But the czar replied: "The league is the most loyal of all organizations and the most useful to the government. It is best to be patient with it and give it time to improve."

No wonder that the chief of police in Odessa, Novitski, when arraigned as one of the instigators of the slaughter of October, 1905, telegraphed to Stolypin: "It is impossible for the police to fight successfully against secret associations whose leaders guarantee their members exemption from punishment for their crimes."

The home secretary then washed his hands of all guilt before the president of the council by shoving the blame on the side government. Straightway the side government appealed with an injured air to the president of the council, protesting its innocence. It is by these methods that sand is thrown into the eyes of non-Russians, and the destruction of all the elements making for liberal thought and culture can go on undisturbed.

And to succeed in this is a matter of chief importance to a Genghis Khan, whether he wear a Mongol beard or a police uniform. All else is secondary.

An Abuse of Power. What does the term "increased supervision" mean? It means that the governors and the town heads are permitted to issue orders for the preven-



Police Patrol Before the Czar's Hiding Places

lected observations, and all expeditions along for some time, and at last remarked, "C'est a puer!"

Enough to make one weep! The assistant minister obtained the same impression of the governors in the year 1907, when all the governors had been changed, everyone who knows anything about the situation has to admit that the change is considerably for the worse, and significantly so.

The home secretary, who he suggests candidates for the post of Governor to the czar, looks more for sympathy with absolutism and for docility than for intellectual qualities. No wonder that there are governors who are not even able to write their names in correct Russian. No wonder that Prince Urussov did not remain governor for long. But if the intellectual level of these governors "is enough to make one weep," one can imagine on what sort of level the subordinate police officials stand, such as the district judges, land commissioners, police sergeants, and policemen. No wonder, too, that in the towns even stablemen are organized and fitted out with various police duties. Their level can hardly be distinguished from that of common police soldiers.

When the times are normal, the general police has as its principal work all affairs connected with passports and censorship in its hands. Besides this, it has to suppress all demonstration and meetings, for which purpose the military is always at its disposal.

There is further the "special" police. Formerly it was called "the third division," and in still earlier times, "the secret office." It has changed its ugly name from time to time, but its occupation has always remained the same. This "special" police department commands an army of policemen, spies, and private agents. Its task is to prevent and to thwart all crimes and transgressions of the law, as well as to exercise a general watchfulness. Further, it says in

The fourth article of this series will appear in next Sunday's Journal.