

October 3, 1983

**Letter of the Collegium of the KGB of the USSR,
'Regarding Measures to Improve the Preventive
Work conducted by the State Security Services'**

Citation:

"Letter of the Collegium of the KGB of the USSR, 'Regarding Measures to Improve the Preventive Work conducted by the State Security Services'", October 3, 1983, Wilson Center Digital Archive, National Security Archive READD-RADD Collection. Translated by Angela Greenfield. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/208230>

Credits:

This document was made possible with support from Carnegie Corporation of New York (CCNY)

Original Language:

Russian

Contents:

Translation - English

Classified

Addendum

To the Order of the Chairman of the KGB of the USSR

Dated " __ " _____ 1983

LETTER OF THE COLLEGIUM OF THE KGB OF THE USSR

Regarding measures to improve
the preventive work conducted
by the state security services

The Great October Socialist Revolution for the first time in the history of humankind created a state free from exploitation of human beings, a state of which a working man became the true master. The new base where the working class owns the means of production, and the right to own land is given to those who works on it, has created new relationships between humans - the relationships of friendship and brotherhood.

Socialism as a political and economic, as well as social and government system, has become a reality, and the country entered a historic stage of transitioning to communism. In the course of building the new society the substance of socialist democracy has been enriched.

"Soviet democracy," as Yu.V. Andropov used to point out, "having met an especially fierce resistance of counter-revolution forces, both internal and external, entered life honestly, without concealing its class character, and legitimized without any hesitation the privileges of working people vis-à-vis representatives of exploiting classes who were fighting the new government."[\[1\]](#)

The Constitution of the USSR recognized the most important qualitative transformation of Soviet governance - the transformation from the dictatorship of the proletariat to the state of the people. The process of the continuous development and broadening of democracy in Soviet society and the refining of the developed socialism posed in front of the party the most important task - to form a new person as the pre-condition for building communism.

The Communist Party throughout the whole period of the formation and development of the socialist state has paid, and continues to pay, a lot of attention to the issues of the upbringing of the Soviet people in the spirit of high patriotism and unconditional loyalty to the Motherland. The ideological and political unity of Soviet society is the biggest achievement of our social system. As comrade Yu.V. Andropov said, "The Party insists that a human being is brought up here not only as the carrier of a certain amount of knowledge, but in the first place as a member of a socialist society, an active builder of communism with all of the attribute ideological values, morals and interests, high work culture and ethical conduct."[\[2\]](#)

This process is taking place in the environment of irreconcilable confrontation between two ideologies. There is an uncompromising struggle for the hearts and minds of billions of people on the planet. Imperialism is trying to discredit the real socialism on the world arena, to erode ideological convictions, and the belief of the Soviet people in the righteousness of the great cause of building communism.

Subversive activities against the USSR encompass all areas of social life. They are conducted with the use of all resources and means available to the enemy, and all sophisticated and insidious techniques and methods. The enemy is placing their bet on conducting pre-planned political and economic subversive acts against the USSR; they are trying to discredit the economic policy of the CPSU and the Soviet

Government, as well as the economic mechanism of the country. They are trying to use international economic, science and technology, cultural, and other relations with the USSR as a method of espionage penetration of our country.

The enemy conducts ideological subversive activities with particular viciousness and undisguised cynicism. Clandestine services and ideological subversive centers are striving to penetrate different layers of Soviet society, placing their bet on the negatively-inclined people, infected with ideas of revisionism, bourgeois nationalism and Zionism, as well as on reactionary elements among the clergy and members of sects, and on individuals susceptible to hostile ideology due to their insufficient ideological maturity and ideological and moral instability. They are actively seeking all sorts of outcasts, mercantile people and gold-diggers, hoping to entice them to cooperate in order to get access to state secrets, collect slanderous and biased information, incite anti-Soviet attitudes and organized anti-social activities, and ultimately to weaken economic and defense potential of our country, and to cause political, ideological and moral harm to it. For these purposes and on the basis of anti-communist and anti-Soviet attitudes the enemy consolidates forces and movements that are hostile to the Soviet Union irrespective of their political orientations. They are organizing overseas various "committees", "groups" and "leagues" that operate on the premise of protecting democratic freedoms and human rights in the Soviet Union, but in reality are a tool of the clandestine services of the enemy, and of the anti-Soviet and reactionary forces.

All attempts of the enemy to undermine socialism in our country are pointless in their essence and are bound to fail. They are countered by the monolith unity of the Soviet society, high political vigilance of the people, and their infinite loyalty to the ideals of communism, as well as their readiness to give a decisive pushback to any enemy schemes.

At the same time we should take into account that in a socialist environment, irrespective of the absence of social and class causes that could give rise to anti-Soviet activity, some individuals may form opinions and beliefs that are foreign to the Marxist-Leninist ideology. Occasionally, as a result of political misconceptions and insufficient ideological training, religious fanaticism and nationalistic anachronisms, moral decay and life difficulties, they step on the path of politically harmful actions. Underestimating these manifestations may lead to a situation where at some point they transform into crimes against the state.

While working towards the goal of the communist education of the Soviet people, the CPSU and the Soviet Government constantly care about strengthening the socialist order by directing their primary efforts to preventing and timely thwarting crimes against the state, and politically harmful manifestations. The Party requires that combating crime in our country is conducted in an uncompromising, radical and proactive manner, using the most effective means and methods.

Using the Party's directions as guidance while fulfilling the most important task of ensuring security of our Motherland, the KGB and its border protection troops focus their efforts on resolutely thwarting espionage and subversive activities of clandestine services and centers of ideological subversion of the enemy and on preventing crimes against the state.

Crimes which the KGB is fighting pose heightened danger for the Soviet system of the government and social system, and therefore preventing treason, a terrorist act or sabotage, a mass unrest and other type of attack on the security of our state is a feat by far more important than reporting on these events after the fact, when individuals involved already have been punished or are subject to punishment under criminal law for their actions.

The Collegium of the State Security Committee of the USSR points out that an important role in thwarting crimes against the state is given to preventive work. Being one of the effective means of achieving the tasks posed in front of the state security services, preventive measures are an integral part of the party-wide efforts to provide communist education to the Soviet people. Preventive work with the use of specialized checkist methods is one of the important ways the KGB takes part in the educational function of the socialist state. It represents a direct continuation of the operative work of the KGB and organically flows out of it.

Review of the KGB's preventive work shows that positive results are, in the first place, attained by branches and units that achieve a high level of operative work in the main areas and directions of the checkist activities, which allows them not only to receive timely tips about negative manifestations, but also to prevent their emergence.

Preventive measures conducted by the KGB allowed us to disrupt a number of serious political actions of the enemy against our country, prevent anti-social manifestations of the anti-Soviet elements and emergencies at production, transportation and communications facilities, as well as to prevent some Soviet citizens from stepping on the path of crime.

Military counterintelligence services have begun to more actively uncover and thwart attempts of the enemy to gain access to military secrets, prevent violations of information security procedures, and uncover negative manifestations and their causes in the Army and the Navy. Preventive efforts aimed at improving countermeasures to ideological subversions of the enemy in the military, conducted by the special operations departments in conjunction with military councils, commands and political offices help to shield the Soviet Military from subversive activities of the enemy, and to prevent the instances of betraying the Motherland and other grave crimes against the state, as well as to prevent the emergence of conditions and environment which may negatively impact combat readiness and combat ability of the troops.

Border protection troops in cooperation with the KGB are conducting a large amount of preventive work aimed at preventing illegal border crossings and violations of border regulations, smuggling across the border enemy [reading materials] and other ideologically harmful literature and materials, copying equipment, weapons, explosives, and other means of conducting subversive acts, as well as contraband.

Successful achievement of the objectives in the area of combating ideological subversive activities of the enemy was promoted by the checkist preventive measures at the facilities where counterintelligence activities are conducted and in the communities of interest for the KGB, as well as by timely actions against some politically immature and misguided Soviet citizens. All this combined with other operative and penal measures allowed us to completely disrupt the plans of the enemy to create in our country a so-called "legal opposition" and to launch under its guise an organized anti-Soviet underground, to prevent ideological subversive actions of the imperialist clandestine services and foreign ideological subversive centers, as well as forays of hostile elements.

Giving positive evaluation to the preventive work of the KGB and its border protection troops, the Collegium, at the same time, is of the opinion that in this important work there are significant shortcomings and deficiencies, which to a certain extent decrease the effectiveness of many preventive activities. Not everywhere and every time [operatives] take into account the fact that preventive measures, as a rule, reverberate through the workplaces and through various layers of society. Therefore they have to be effective and reach the educational goal, as well as be widely understood by the working people.

Some operatives reduce preventive work to one-off measures against certain people who commit acts that hurt or may hurt the interests of state security. Not always do they create necessary conditions for properly influencing the person with respect to whom the preventive action is taken, not always do they succeed in getting him to understand his misconceptions and mistakes, as well as get a thought-through renunciation of them. Such an approach towards preventive work which does not take into account the necessity of reinforcing the effects of preventive measures by utilizing open and covert capabilities, lowers the importance and the educational role of preventive work. As a result, occasional repeat offenses on the part of such persons do happen.

We have noted cases when some KGB branches determine preventive measures without taking into account the political and operational feasibility. Sometimes they display harmful tendencies towards quantitative indicators and as a result make decisions to conduct preventive measures in cases of low importance and sometimes even in cases that have nothing to do with the KGB area of responsibility. We have noted instances when as a result of rush decisions to conduct preventive activities a thorough check of the received tips and materials was not conducted, which didn't allow for full discovery of anti-Social actions of persons who have become a subject of the KGB's focus.

We can't consider as correct the practice when subjects of operative monitoring after the preventive measures against them have been completed, including when an official warning was issued, are left without proper operative monitoring. In some state security branches there are inadmissible cases when preventive measures are taken against persons who have committed acts dangerous to society, which qualify as crimes and need to be criminally prosecuted.

Many shortcomings in the preventive work of the KGB are, in the first place, due to insufficient deep knowledge of the environment, untimeliness in identifying trends towards politically harmful manifestations, weak work with agents and co-optees, as well as the absence of necessary contacts with the public and administrative personnel of organizations, enterprises, institutions, and military command.

The Collegium requires that the preventive measures carried out by the KGB and border protection troops are directed at the elimination of reasons and causes of the crimes and thus promote the increase in the effectiveness of the checkist work as a whole. For this, we need to use all of the operative, organizational, administrative, political, educational, penal and other measures. When conducting preventive activities, the state security agency should not allow any sort of disparagement of soviet citizens. We have to fight for every Soviet person when that person makes a mistake, and help him find the right way.

We have to always remember that conducting preventive activities based on unverified and biased information is a violation of law, and it also causes emotional harm to a Soviet person, at the same time discrediting and undermining the authority of the state security agency among the Soviet people.

It is imperative that preventive measures of the KGB, in all areas of their work, are justified, timely and effective. This poses a requirement on the leadership and operatives to know well, and accurately and objectively evaluate the operative environment, to quickly react to emerging negative processes which can cause harm to the security of the soviet state and society, and to take measures to neutralize them.

At the same time, we have to proceed from an assumption that every instance of non-prevention of particularly dangerous subversive acts, as well as group anti-social manifestations, which cause political and economic harm to the state, represents a

consequence of a specific misjudgment in our work. The effectiveness of preventive work has to be evaluated based on its specific results, depending on whether the action taken reached its planned goal. Therefore, we have to continue working with individuals with respect to whom the preventive action was taken and take into account that the preventive action against a specific person is a lengthy process which requires great efforts.

When combating state crimes the agency and the border protection troops of the KGB have to constantly care about broadening and strengthening the connection with the workplaces and the public, to promote an increase in the participation of the Soviet people in the state security of the country. In practical work we have to pay more attention to conducting various preventive activities aimed at strengthening the security of the soviet society, as well as to having an educational impact on the politically and morally unstable people who may enter the path of state crimes.

The KGB's preventive measures have to be aimed at the comprehensive increase in the vigilance of the Soviet people, which would make it more difficult for the enemy agents to penetrate facilities that are under the operative supervision, as well as into the environment that the enemy is interested in; it would prevent the leaks of state secrets, promote the timely uncovering of incidents that may cause emergency situations (explosions, fires, accidents, catastrophes, etc.), and would eliminate the possibility of the emergence of any sort of anti-Soviet and anti-social manifestations of politically harmful nature.

Military counterintelligence services have to more actively assist military councils, commands and political offices of the Armed Forces in developing and conducting preventive measures aimed at educating the servicemen in the spirit of high political vigilance, shield them from subversive acts of imperialist clandestine services, foreign anti-Soviet centers and hostile elements; create conditions which will promote the increase of combat readiness and combat ability of the armed forces.

Border Protection Troops need to improve the preventive measures aimed at illegal crossings of the USSR border, step up the cooperation with the local KGB branches and special departments in conducting educational work among the servicemen, as well as the residents in the border areas, and actively engage them in helping protect the state border.

In accordance with the directions of the May 1981 National Consultation Meeting of the leadership of the KGB and its troops, on the issue of raising the level of operative work in the area of preventing negative processes, the efforts of the KGB have still to be directed at timely uncovering and thwarting hostile and negative manifestations incited by the enemy and anti-Soviet elements, as well as at countering all forms of ideological sabotage. With this purpose we have to actively use all available, and create new, operative resources to uncover and thwart the plots of clandestine services of imperialist states and foreign anti-Soviet centers and organizations, aimed at undermining the Soviet society from within.

It is necessary to conduct preventive measures with the purpose of preventing repeat offenses among individuals who served terms for state crimes, to continuously influence in a politically advantageous way those who are harboring thoughts of emigration, as well as anti-social elements who are being catered to by the enemy in order to timely prevent the attempts of spreading among the Soviet people ideas and beliefs foreign to our society.

We ought to patiently, and in a targeted fashion, influence those among the artistic intelligentsia and young people, who due to their political immaturity and misconceptions and without any hostile intent spread views foreign to Soviet society. We have to seriously, and in depth, deal with everyone who found themselves under

the influence of enemy propaganda, deal with them in a personalized way, and find such traits in their character and behavior which can be influenced in a positive way.

In preventive activities it is better to use the mass media capabilities- press, cinema, radio, TV, and to engage writers' and other artistic unions in creating documentaries and feature films that would depict vigilance of the soviet people in successful unmasking of espionage and subversive activities of clandestine services of imperialist states, their agents, ideological saboteurs, and other enemies of our state. Skillfully use the court case files of state treason cases as an important educational tool of preventive quality. We have to make sure that these propaganda activities of the checkist services in accordance with the requirements of the CPSU's Central Committee are conducted at a high quality level, have effective character, are used in creative ways, and take into account the existing environment and the higher level of education of the soviet people, as well as the needs of various social groups among the population.

The Collegium of the KGB stresses the importance of and need for active involvement of the agency and the KGB troops in the party's activities aimed at raising political vigilance of the soviet people. With this purpose we should more broadly rely on the party, Komsomol and professional unions of the ministries, state committees, agencies, institutions, enterprises and organizations, subdivisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Soviet Army and the Navy, as well as on the veterans of party and labor.

We should considerably raise the level and quality of information communicated to the party branches about the forms and methods of subversive activities of the enemy clandestine services, ideological subversive centers and hostile elements, and timely report negative manifestations and facts related to slacking of political vigilance, and violations of information security regulations at defense and production facilities, transportation and communications facilities, situation in the border areas, as well as negative attitudes of some groups of population, and other issues related to the provision of state security.

Important roles in conducting operative and investigative activities should be given to studying the causes of crimes and anti-social manifestations, as well as conditions promoting their commitment. In line with the established procedures, we have to inform these issues to the heads of respective party and public organizations, institutions, enterprises, commands and political offices.

We should approach reviewing files and making decisions about preventive measures against specific individuals with great care. Their legal evaluation should not be exclusively formal. When needed, investigators may be engaged in reviewing the materials. Specific characteristics of an individual should be taken into account, as well as his moral qualities. We have to thoughtfully analyze the motives behind his undesired manifestations and the attitude towards him in his closest circle.

Particular care needs to be taken when deciding on whether to take preventive action against persons who allow themselves to make statements of terrorist, sabotage or treasonous nature. The decision on whether to take preventive actions with respect to such individuals should be taken only when there is verifiable information that there are no indicators of them preparing to commit terrorist acts or acts of sabotage.

KGB leadership, as well as command of the KGB troops, need to personally participate in preparation and carrying out preventive actions against Soviet citizens when engaging the public at their workplace in the prevention process. The misconduct should be put up for discussion among the employees at the workplace only in those cases when such discussions will have an educational impact, not only on the person with respect to whom the preventive action is being taken, but also on

other members of employee group. These events need to be meticulously prepared and carried out under the supervision of the party and political offices, and every precaution has to be taken not to divulge the checkist methods of work during these events, as well as classified government or military information.

Preventive activities, with the participation of the public, have to be assigned to experienced officers capable of properly organizing them and ensuring the maximum educational impact on the person with respect to whom the preventive action is being taken and on their immediate circle.

We have to pay special attention to the justification and correctness of application of official warning as a preventive measure, which is stipulated by the Decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of the USSR dated December 25, 1972. Official warning is a sharp form of preventive intervention and it should be used in correlation with the specific negative manifestations of the individual, as well as when there is a good chance that the warning will serve as a deterrent for the [future] unlawful activities on the part of the person who has gone astray.

The Collegium of the KGB of the USSR sees a need of continued increase of the use of agents and co-optees in the preventive work of the KGB and its border protection troops. We have to be more proactive in working with those agents and co-optees who based on their personal qualities are capable of having positive influence on misguided and politically immature citizens, shield them from enemy influences, especially in the initial stages of forming politically-harmful beliefs and opinions. The decision about using agent network and co-optees in preventive activities has to be made based on detailed study and knowledge of personality traits of the person with respect to whom the preventive action is taken, and this work has to be conducted under the daily supervision of the operative over the actions of the agent and the co-optee.

We should always take into account that the effectiveness of preventive work is directly correlated with the professional skills of the leadership and operative personnel, their ability to use resources and capabilities that the state security agency has to offer, and correctly evaluate changes in operative environments and immediately react to them, to perform their work in a proactive and offensive manner.

Preventive work requires that members of the KGB personnel are highly ideologically prepared, have deep legal knowledge, are able to tell people very well (are able to tell a masked enemy from a confused, politically immature person). When working on achieving objectives of shielding the Soviet society from nefarious activities of imperialist clandestine services, every checkist has to obey the law, display impeccable personal conduct, be deeply loyal to the cause of the party and the people, strictly fulfill the requirements of the Communist party with respect to the reliable provision of state security of our motherland, strictly follow Soviet laws in their work, as well as orders, directives and directions of the leadership of the KGB of the USSR; to constantly improve the forms of communication with the masses, educate the Soviet people in the spirit of uncompromising attitude towards violations of the law and other negative manifestations that hurt the interests of the Soviet state.

The Collegium of the State Security Committee would like to express its confidence that the Soviet checkists, when performing the party assignments which were developed at the party congress and plenary meetings of the CPSU's Central Committee, as well as the directives of the National Consultation Meetings of the Leadership and Troops of the KGB, will do everything necessary in order to further improve and increase the quality of preventive work which is an integral part of the work of the KGB and border protection troops in providing state security of the Union

of Soviet Socialist republics.

Collegium of the State Security Committee of the USSR.

1983

[illegible signature]

[\[1\]](#) Yu.V. Andropov, Selected Speeches and Articles, Moscow, Politizdat Publishing House, 1983, p.242

[\[2\]](#) Yu.V. Andropov, Selected Speeches and Articles, Moscow, Politizdat Publishing House, 1983, p.293