

Office Memorandum • UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

DATE: 17 December 1959

TO : Bruce L. Solie, C/RB/SRS/OS

FROM : M. D. Stevens, RB/SRS/OS

SUBJECT: KAMKIN, Victor Petrovich
AI-2752 - SSD-90097

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A review of Subject's file has been made in connection with a request from the CI Officer, French Desk, with reference to information from the [redacted] that Subject's Washington book store, as of the summer of 1959, was one of the four book stores in the United States where subscriptions could be bought for "RODINA", the bulletin edited by the Repatriation Committee of East Berlin. "RODINA" (LA PATRIE), which is distributed in various languages and is mailed in sealed envelopes, has been forbidden distribution in France. (See attached thermofax.)

Security files reflect that in April 1957 the FBI advised that Victor Petrovich KAMKIN, Elena Andreevna KAMKIN and Nina SAPELKIN had been the subjects of an Internal Security - R type investigation as of 1951 and that: "There is no derogatory data of a subversive nature in the files of this Bureau concerning the subject of your inquiry (KAMKIN). It should be noted, however, that Victor Petrovich KAMKIN is currently of investigative interest to this Bureau and, accordingly, it is requested that any contact of him in behalf of the Central Intelligence Agency be handled by this Bureau." [redacted]

According to an undated blind memorandum (possibly a Staff C memorandum), Nina SAPELKIN is Elena KAMKIN's sister and as of 1951 was living with the KAMKINS in Tennessee. Nina SAPELKIN was born in Russia 18 August 1912; and was evacuated from Shanghai to Samar, Philippine Islands under IRO auspices in April 1949, accompanied by her husband Semen I. SAPELKIN and their two children. She came to the United States in 1951 and lived in Tennessee for a time with the KAMKINS. The SAPELKINS reportedly renounced Soviet citizenship in Shanghai in September or October 1948.

MRS. SAPELKIN
ALSO LIVED WITH THE
KAMKINS IN FALLS
CHURCH, VA. FROM
1952 TO 1953 WHEN
ALL MOVED TO
WASHINGTON

The KAMKINS also were born in Russia and KAMKIN attended high school and university in Harbin, Manchuria. Thereafter until 1945 he was in the printing and publishing business in China; and during 1946-47 says he was with "Special Services, Section II, Amph., Marine Corps", working on its newspaper, "North China Marina". In 1947 he was co-publisher of "Free Word" which he says was an anti-Soviet newspaper closed by pressure of the Soviet

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Consulate. From 1947 to 1949 he stated that he was the owner of the "Anchor Printing Shop" in which the "North China Marine" continued publication in Tsingtao, China. The KAMKINs came to the United States in 1949 arriving in San Francisco in March.

As of 1957 KAMKIN was being used on an unclassified basis by the CIA Library as a publications procurement channel. It is, of course, possible that Subject's interest in "RODINA" is on behalf of this Agency.

The other book stores involved in the report to the French Desk were the well known Communist "Four Continents Book Store", (MS-2000), "Imported Publications and Products" (MS-2001-I) and "Universal Distributors Company" (#91916). These organizations are registered under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. The Four Continents Book Store is flagrantly Communist & needs no defining; and the "Imported Publications and Products" is reported to be one of the four principal outlets for Communist political propaganda in the United States. "Universal Distributors Company" is described as "an official distributor of Communist Party literature" and as "Communist controlled". It is the distributing agency for the Four Continents Book Store.

Information from a reliable confidential informant reflects that during the summer of 1959 KAMKIN indicated he planned to open a branch book store in San Francisco to be operated by S. SAPELKIN. The store was to be called Znanie, Russian Book Store, and located at 5237 Geary Street, San Francisco. This S. SAPELKIN, in all probability, is Mrs. KAMKIN's brother-in-law Semen I. SAPELKIN, MS-5000, who with his wife Nina, nee DAVIDOVA, aka DAVIDOF, was the subject of an FBI Record Check Request in May 1955. (The wife Nina, per the check sheet, resided at Route 1, Van Leer, Tennessee from 1951 to 1952, which was the KAMKIN's address during this period.)

The 1955 FBI Record Check Request on SAPELKIN indicated that he was formerly a painter; that his wife Nina was a dentist; that both were born in Russia; that he arrived in the United States from France around the end of 1954, was stateless and had his first paper; and that she arrived in San Francisco 5 June 1951. They were residing at 1405 Harvard Street, N.W., Washington, D. C. (which was the address of Subject's book store); and had formerly resided in Tientsin and Shanghai, China. Both their children were born in Tientsin, one in 1946 and one in 1949.

An RI check requested in 1957 for USIA indicated that the name Semen I. SAPELKIN appeared in a report from a reliable source in May 1950, which dealt with refugees in an IRO camp at Guinan, Samar, Philippine Islands; and, according to the report, he had been a member of the Russian Residents Association (probably Russian

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Emigrants Association) and of the Soviet Club in Shanghai.

An ONI name check on KAMKIN, in November 1954, reflected the cross-referencing of his name to "Foreign Service Dispatch, Hong Kong #402, 22 August 1952", the subject of which was "Contact of Mr. Veniamin VASILIEVITCH SAPELKIN with the Hong Kong Consulate General"; while results of a 1957 "K" check based on this same "Foreign Service Dispatch, Hong Kong #402, 22 August 1952, Secret", reads as follows: "Mr. SAPELKIN reported that he had recently received various communications from a White Russian friend of his, Mr. Victor P. KAMKIN who was formerly head of the Russian Emigrants Association in Tsingtao, China. Mr. KAMKIN left China early in 1949 and has resided in the United States since that time. Both SAPELKIN and KAMKIN reportedly had certain contacts with a Eugene GORDENEV, Russian-speaking officer attached to the G-2 Section of the First Marine Division in Tientsin following the Japanese Surrender in 1945. Mr. KAMKIN has now written to Hong Kong asking Mr. SAPELKIN to supply certain economic information on North China and Manchuria for the use of the 'American Government'. Mr. KAMKIN indicates that he is involved in certain intelligence activities." [In a letter of 13 July 1950, offering his services to ONI, Subject named GORDENEV as one who could "substantiate my work in China". ONI advised CIA that their records contained no derogatory information regarding Subject, but that ONI did not contemplate utilizing his services.]



copy of this
dispatch has
been obtained
- references
are to the
same individual.

Subject's friend "Mr. SAPELKIN" may well be Mr. Veniamin Vasilievitch SAPELKIN, the Subject of Hong Kong Dispatch, #402, who in all probability is related to Mrs. KAMKIN's brother-in-law, Semen I. SAPELKIN.

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According to a 1955 RI check conducted on one Alexander S. ORLOFF for G-2, a report of 17 May 1950 advised that ORLOFF (who had been described as an "Old Soviet worker") was closely associated with Veniamin Vasilievitch SAPELKIN, an alleged Soviet agent at the IRO Camp at Samar, P. I. As reported above, Mrs. KAMKIN's sister Nina and her husband Semen SAPELKIN were evacuated to Samar, P. I., from Shanghai under IRO auspices in April 1949.

Veniamin Vasilievitch SAPELKIN's friend ORLOFF, according to a report of 8 April 1950, was alleged to have influenced a district leader of the IRO Camp at Samar with pro-Soviet propaganda, and to have worked with a number of other pro-Soviet internees in the camp to Sovietize the Russian refugees interned there. According to a report dated 5 May 1950, ORLOFF allegedly was believed to be a Soviet agent. (The report noted that this information originated in the IRO Camp in Samar; that much information originating there had proven unreliable; and that the reliability of this particular information had not been determined.)

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ORLOFF

However this may be, it appears that there could be much truth in the allegations. Information in Security files reflects that ORLOFF very possibly is identical with a "Count ORLOFF of the Russian Committee", (apparently a committee of IRO), who assisted the Commercial Counselor for the Bulgarian Legation in securing IRO employment for one Bogdana OTTAL, a possible Soviet agent in Paris who was living with and was engaged to marry Kiril VASSILIEV, who was believed to be an agent of the Bulgarian Military Intelligence Service. "Count ORLOFF" also helped arrange OTTAL's entrance into the United States. Alexander S. ORLOFF and "Count ORLOFF" may well be identical with Alexander ORLOFF, DL-2881, a highly suspect individual of Russian birth, and a former AITORG employee who was security disapproved by OSS in 1943. This latter individual, per a 1943 OSS investigation, was known as "The Count".

A December 1954 Staff C memorandum regarding KAMKIN, reported that unevaluated information dated 1 June 1948 indicated that one Victor N. KAMKIN was involved in a money printing transaction with the Japanese, in which he used the machinery of the Chihli Press in Tientsin to facilitate the counterfitting. The source of this information had pointed out the possibility that Victor N. KAMKIN might be identified in some way with a V. P. KAMKIN who was named as a character reference by one Vladimir Vasily IVASHKOFF. (IVASHKOFF was not identified.) The memorandum advised that according to a report dated 1 June 1948 from a U. S. Naval Attache, Nanking, to the American Ambassador, Nanking, V. N. KAMKIN was a printer and publisher in Shanghai and later was in charge of the Russian Publishing House known as Nashe ZNANIE. He was closely associated with Bernard S. ROGARD of the Chihli Press, who in turn was associated with alleged Soviet espionage agent Olga NAKVASIN.


According to the Staff C memorandum, a report from the FBI dated 14 August 1953 indicated that a source of unknown reliability stated that one Victor KAMKIN, who operated a book store as a possible cover in Tientsin, China, acted as a paid informer of the Japanese during World War II; and was a paid informer of U. S. Army Intelligence after the War. With the assistance of the American Military Government in Tsingtao, China, he became Chairman of the Russian Immigrant Society in Tsingtao in 1948. There seems small doubt that this Victor KAMKIN is identical with Victor N. KAMKIN, and with Subject, Victor P. KAMKIN who was formerly head of the Russian Immigrant Association in Tsingtao, China, according to his friend SAPELKIN, as reported in Hong Kong Dispatch #402. Note that Victor N. KAMKIN was in charge of a Russian Publishing House in China known as Nashe Znanie; and that the branch store Subject intended to open in San Francisco (and may have opened) was also to be called Znanie (this work in Russian means "Knowledge").

Bernard S. ROGARD of the Chihli Press, referred to

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all

above as a close associate of Subject and also of alleged Soviet espionage agent Olga NAKVASIN, is the Subject of SSD file #35095. ROGARD is a former U. S. Marine whose parents were Polish-born and who lived in China for twenty years prior to returning to the United States in 1950. He allegedly was pro-Soviet, ie: ridiculed White Russians who did not avail themselves of Soviet citizenship made available to them; hired as Editor of his Tientsin Evening Journal, following its resumption after the War, one Leonoff who was an employee of TASS; followed a Communist inspired line in his newspaper; and published without comment in his Tientsin Evening Journal a letter discrediting American Military Police in Tientsin, comparing them unfavorably with Soviet Military Police in Harbin who were praised in glowing terms; etc. ROGARD, "if used" by Project PILLAR, was to be limited to Category II; but his wife, ~~Anna~~ Ibragimoff ROGARD, #79069, had clearance for a "very sensitive use on another Project".

Mrs. ROGARD appears to have had clearances for responsible positions with [redacted] since 1953. Her association with the Agency was terminated in May 1959, with the termination of Project ~~ABRHO~~, but she gave [redacted] a "hard time" for months and refused to sign her secrecy agreement until 30 November 1959. Various relatives of hers have in the past been associated with the Agency. Mrs. ROGARD appears to have had much the same history as Subject. She was born in Russia of Russian-born parents, of Turko-Tartar nationality; left Russia in 1919 for Harbin; was educated in Mukden and Tientsin; and was employed in Tientsin in various import-export firms, etc. (No thorough study has been made of the ROGARDS' files.)


M. D. Stevens

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