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Agent Reports of the Finnish Gendarme Directorate on the Activities of Social Democrats, 1907–1914

Abstract

The article describes by drawing on a significant range of archival sources the key stages of establishing intelligence work to cover the activities of Social Democratic organizations in the Grand Duchy of Finland, which became a safe haven for many Russian revolutionaries. Given the significant limitations on the "bluecoats" powers on Finnish soil, the presence of a high-quality network of secret agents was particularly important. Despite this systematic intelligence work was not conducted until the early 20th century. The Vyborg Security Department, which existed from March 5, 1903, to November 27, 1904, under the leadership of Collegiate Secretary P. I. Borisov, proved ineffective, neglecting to acquire agents and focusing primarily on organizing surveillance. Despite the funds allocated, the head of the Finnish Gendarme Directorate (FGD) also lacked a significant network of agents. The starting point for systematic intelligence coverage was the establishment of an investigative agency under the leadership of the Senior Assistant Clerk of the Police Department (PD) L. P. Menshchikov in early 1906. However, by August 1, 1906 it was abolished and its resources, secret agents, and agents were divided between the FGD and the St. Petersburg Security Department. Despite the fact that the activities of representatives of major parties, including the leading cadres of the RSDLP, were covered by secret agents of the leading security departments, as well as by the Foreign Agents of the DP, the head of the FGD was required to acquire his own agents. On October 30, 1908, Colonel K.-R. K. Utgof reported the presence of 40 secret agents, of which only eight provided information on the Social Democrats. By 1911, the Finnish Social Democratic Party (FSDLP) was covered by nine secret agents, the most useful of whom were Lieutenant Colonel D. D. Provolsky's agents, "Matti" and "Sundblum." "Matti" was able to gain insight into the financial situation and international relations of the FSDLP, as well as the intentions of the party's leaders. According to intelligence reports submitted monthly by the directorate chief to the DP, the agents who provided information on Russian Social Democrats in 1911-1912... The following were active agents: "Koltsov," "Batumsky," "Bulochnikov," "Pyatachkov," "Ivanov," "Rabochoy," "Steklyarov," "Aman," "Svechkin," and auxiliary agents "Pisny," "Ognevoy," and others. However, a significant portion of the information they provided consisted of insignificant reports about workers' meetings in Helsinki at the local branch of the Social Democratic Party of Finland. Between 1910 and 1912 three audits of the directorate were conducted which found the political investigation system within the FGD to be unsatisfactory, the absence of a central agency, and the uncovering of a number of large-scale hoaxes.

Keywords

Police Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Separate Gendarme Corps, Security Department, Grand Duchy of Finland, Central Committee of the RSDLP, St. Petersburg Committee of the RSDLP, political police, agents, M. F. von Koten, L. P. Menshchikov, K.-R. K. Uthoff, D. D. Provolsky, Social Democracy, political sentiment.

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