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## **The Work of the State Security Bodies of Stavropolsky Krai during the Great Patriotic War and in the Post-War Period\***

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**Abstract.** *The article shows the work of the chekists of Stavropolsky krai during the Great Patriotic War and in the post-war decades. The purpose of this article is to study the forms and methods of practical activities of the state security bodies in their fight against banditry, the German invaders and their accomplices-collaborators from among Soviet citizens during the war. New archival documents reveal the contribution of the regional chekists to the formation of the destruction battalions and partisan units, the creation of an intelligence network operating behind the enemy lines, the exposure and neutralization of foreign agents. Specific examples show the work of the state security officials searching for former collaborators in the post-war decades. The result of their efforts was the exposure of former accomplices of the German invaders, the conduct of a thorough investigation of their crimes against Soviet citizens during the war years and severe, fair verdicts issued by military tribunals and courts. In conclusion it is noted that the work of chekists in Stavropolsky krai connected with the exposure of war criminals continues up to the present. After all, there is no statute of limitations for such crimes against humanity.*

**Keywords:** banditry, collaborationism, courts-martial, retaliation, Stavropolsky krai, the Great Patriotic War, the NKVD.

### **Introduction**

During the Great Patriotic War the state security agencies of the USSR made their significant contribution into the Victory over Nazi Germany. They had to work in a very difficult situation which was caused by several reasons. Firstly, in the pre-war years the state security bodies suffered serious losses as a result of Stalin's repressions, tens of thousands of competent chekists who had unique experience in fighting with the intelligence services hostile to the Soviet Union had been subjected to repression. Young cadres only began to gain experience and were gradually involved in this work. Secondly, during the war there were several reorganizations of the state security agencies, they became a separate department for some time but then again they were included into the structure of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (NKVD). Thirdly, during almost four years of the war thousands of state security officials were killed either in direct combats, either in special operations.

Despite these difficulties, the state security bodies and their officials did their best in the fight against the Abwehr and other intelligence,

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counterintelligence and diversionary bodies of Nazi Germany. The chekists of Stavropolsky krai (Ordzhonikidze krai – till the January of 1943) made a great contribution in this battle against foreign intelligence agencies. Unfortunately, the researchers do not have complete information about their numerous operations because of the closed nature of the archives of the state security bodies, including the period of the Great Patriotic War. But even this little information, that is free to public access, gives us the possibility to understand the important role the checkists played in the war against German invaders.

### **Methodology**

The present study uses modern methods of historical research to highlight the activities of Stavropolsky krai security agencies during and after World War II.

In the first place these are the methods of historicism and objectivity, systematicity and comparative analysis. In the aggregate these research methods and principles enabled the authors to examine all the phenomena and processes connected with the formation of the destruction battalions and partisan units in Stavropolsky krai.

They also gave the possibility to show the creation and development of an intelligence network operating behind the enemy lines, the exposure of the traitors to the Motherland and neutralization of foreign agents in the specific historical setting and absolute strict chronological sequence.

### **Results**

The chekists of Stavropolsky krai made a great contribution into the creation of destruction battalions. They didn't only help local Party and Soviet authorities with the process of their organization, but they also took great efforts to train the members of (these paramilitary units) , to provide them with weapons and combat equipment. It should be mentioned as well that all the destruction battalions of the country – established in the republics, regions and provinces – were run by the bodies of the NKVD. They were controlled by the command staff headed by Major-General G. Petrov. In the summer of 1941, the captain of the militia Balbasenko was appointed commander of the destruction battalions of the NKVD Administration in Stavropolsky krai<sup>1</sup>.

Since the autumn of 1941, the destruction battalions of Stavropolsky krai, along with training and with the performance of patrol-guard service, had to take part in military operations against bandit anti-Soviet groups acting in the mountains of the Karachay Autonomous Oblast. According to the information of Pankov, head of Stavropol regional NKVD

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<sup>1</sup> Государственный архив новейшей истории ставропольского края, ф. 1, л. 2, с. 240, ш. 37.

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administration, there were deserters, criminals, local nationalists and even a few militiamen collaborating with bandits in the gangs of Kuchukov, Bairamukov, Batchaiev, operating mostly in Uchkulansky district. Under the direction of the NKVD officials, the destruction battalions carried out a number of mass operations and round-ups, having detained 698 bandits and having destroyed their main forces<sup>2</sup>.

In the first months of 1942 the paramilitary units of Stavropolsky krai in cooperation with chekists realized a whole series of operations. By combined efforts they arrested 355 suspects, 326 citizens without documents and more than 70 deserters of the Red Army (The State Archives of contemporary history of Stavropolsky krai (SACHSK)<sup>3</sup>.

Since the middle of February 1943, after the expulsion of the German invaders, the destruction battalions in Stavropolsky krai were led by the deputy chief of the NKVD Office for Stavropolsky krai, militia colonel Balbasenko, and the chief of the staff of destruction battalions of the NKVD Administration, militia captain Skirdenko. In Stavropol Regional Party Committee, the work on the re-creation of destruction battalions was controlled and directed by the Military department, the head of which was P.N. Chernikov. They had to work hard to re-create destruction battalions and then to supervise them when carrying out various operations. The seriousness of the situation that had developed in the liberated areas of Stavropolsky krai after the expulsion of the German invaders is shown by the fact that the bands consisting of criminal elements, deserters and traitors operated in a number of districts of the region. Thus, according to the information of the Regional Administration of the NKVD, by early August 1943, 105 bands were active in various districts of Stavropolsky krai, each of which had from two to forty people. The NKVD officials gave every unit a operational name: “*Wave*”, “*Mould*”, “*Cowards*”, “*Cave residents*”, “*Forest residents*”, “*Traitors*”, etc<sup>4</sup>. Thanks to the well coordinated work of the chekists and fighters of the destruction battalions, all these bands were liquidated soon.

The officials of the state security bodies made even a greater contribution into the creation of partisan units in Stavropolsky krai. The Regional Party Committee (kraikom) recommended to the District Party Committees (raikoms) and City Party Committees (gorkoms) of the VKP(b) (the All-Union Communist Party ‘bolsheviks’) to establish these partisan units considering the personnel that operated in the destruction. In the resolution of the Bureau of Stavropol Regional Party Committee of the VKP(b) “The plan for organizing a partisan movement on the territory of the

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<sup>2</sup> Государственный архив новейшей истории ставропольского края, ф. 23, л. 1, с. 1073, ш. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Государственный архив новейшей истории ставропольского края, ф. 1, л. 2, с. 210, ш. 110.

<sup>4</sup> Государственный архив новейшей истории ставропольского края, ф. 1, л. 2, с. 1038, ш. 8.

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region" of July 22, 1942, it was stated in this connection: "Partisan units are organized on the basis of the now existing destruction battalions. The available armament of the destruction battalions are transferred to the partisan units"<sup>5</sup>.

In several partisan units the officials of the state security bodies held the positions of unit commanders or commissars. There was also the position of the chief intelligence officer in every partisan unit, according to its staff. "It was, as a rule, an official of the NKVD, who had the appropriate experience of reconnaissance and sabotage work. He was supported by a group of 7-10 scouts"<sup>6</sup>. According to the data of the Regional Party Committee of the VKP(b), as of the end of September 1942, 393 officials of the Regional Administration of the NKVD were in the muster rolls of the partisan units in Stavropolsky krai, which amounted to about 20% of the total number of all the partisans in the region<sup>7</sup>.

As showed the subsequent battles of Stavropol partisan units with the German troops, it was the representatives of the NKVD organs who turned out to be the most militarily prepared partisans in the detachments. According to the archives, 35 partisans-chekists perished or went missing in the battles with German invaders and their accomplices<sup>8</sup>.

On the eve of the occupation of Stavropolsky krai by the enemy, the Germans threw by parachute a group of scout-saboteurs out of 11 people in the mountainous-wooded terrain of the Karachay Autonomous Oblast. A few days later the operational officers of the NKVD department of Pregradnensky district, headed by the sergeant of the state security bodies V.L. Oskanov, got on their trail. The chekists liquidated the enemy agents, having captured abundant trophies including walkie-talkies, submachine-guns, explosives, large amounts of the Soviet and Turkish money. For this successful operation V.L. Oskanov was awarded the Order of the Red Banner, and the detective of the NKVD department of Pregradnensky district S.P. Polikarpov – the Order of the Red Star<sup>9</sup>.

During the period of the German occupation on the greater part of the territory of Stavropolsky krai, the Regional Administration of the NKVD carried out a great deal of work to identify the distribution of enemy troops, their garrisons and headquarters, and to determine the basic directions of the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ставрополье в Великой Отечественной войне. 1941-1945 гг. Сборник документов и материалов.* Ставрополь, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> А.С. Линец, С.И. Линец, *Партизанское движение на Ставрополье в период немецко-фашистской оккупации края (август 1942 г. – январь 1943 г.)*. Пятигорск : Спецпечать, 2005.

<sup>7</sup> Государственный архив новейшей истории ставропольского края, ф. 69, л. 1, с. 1, ш. 51.

<sup>8</sup> Архивы УФСБ РФ по Ставропольскому краю. Открытые источники. К истории органов государственной безопасности в Ставропольском крае, д. 149, л. 45-52.

<sup>9</sup> Военный зал славы УФСБ РФ по Ставропольскому краю. Открытые источники. Экспозиция «К истории органов государственной безопасности в Ставропольском крае».

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administrative and economic policy of the Hitlerites. Soviet scouts-chekists passed hundreds of kilometres through the occupied territory, scrupulously marking all the most important enemy objects and informing our command in a timely manner. But under their now-declassified texts of reports, instead of real names, we can see only the pseudonyms of agents: “*Omelchenko*”, “*Euseenko*”, “*Golovenko*”, “*Siveriakova*”, “*Boevaya*”, etc. In the documents of the wartime they passed under the term “source”. For example, in the intelligence report of the source under the pseudonym “*Siveriakova*”, it was noted that early in December 1942: “... in Pyatigorsk on the Soviet Avenue (in the building of the spa clinic) the headquarters of the Germans is located ..., there is also, allegedly, German headquarters opposite the Dynamo club in the building of the technical school of sericulture”<sup>10</sup>. In another informant report from the source “*Boevaya*”, it was mentioned that at the beginning of November there were about 100 German trucks, also camouflaged tanks in the village of Urozhainoye in Levokumsky District. Here, the Soviet intelligence officer discovered machine-gun and mortar fire positions<sup>10</sup>. All these and other valuable intelligence data were summarized in the briefing of the NKVD Office for Stavropolsky krai and in mid-December 1942, i.e. on the eve of the advance of the troops of the Transcaucasian Front, were sent to the command of the Red Army, signed by the acting chief of the regional NKVD administration, the Major of the State Security Pankov. No doubt that they were most thoroughly studied and used in planning the offensive operations of the Transcaucasian Front, which began in the first days of January 1943.

During the period of German occupation, Stavropolsky krai local chekists prepared and sent on the occupied territory 13 reconnaissance and sabotage units, 98 scouts and saboteurs, specially prepared for the operations behind enemy lines. During the battle for the Caucasus, two schools training radio operators, five operational-chekist groups worked in the front-line zone. Part of the officials of the state security bodies from the regional Administration was sent to handle transport in the front-line zone, the other part joined the 2nd and 3rd special forces detachments of the NKVD troops defending the passes of the Main Caucasian Range and Mount Elbrus. Here the chekists fought heroically with the German Alpine shooters from the 1st Edelweiss Mountain Division of General Lanz. Many of them were killed, but together with other units of the Red Army they did not allow the enemy to cross the passes to the Soviet Transcaucasia.

All in all, during the years of the Great Patriotic War, the chekists of Stavropol exposed 905 agents of foreign intelligence services, including German – 895, Turkish – 4, Romanian – 2, Italian – 2, Iranian – 2. During

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<sup>10</sup> В. Водолажская, М.И. Кривнева, Н.А. Мельник, *Ставрополье в период немецко-фашистской оккупации (август 1942 — январь 1943 гг.): документы и материалы*, Ставрополь, Кн. изд-во, 2000.

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the four years of the war, 453 spies, including 25 paratroopers, were arrested. They had been thrown into the territory of Stavropolsky krai by enemy intelligence services<sup>9</sup>.

In the declassified documents of the Federal Security Service Directorate for Stavropolsky krai, the figures of the awards for the feats of Stavropol chekists are given. For example, after the discovery of all the circumstances of their heroic activity, which took as much as 20 years, by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on May 10, 1965, 24 chekists were awarded orders and medals, some of them posthumously.

Unfortunately, during the German occupation some officials of the regional NKVD began to collaborate with the enemy for different reasons. In the lists captured by the chekists in Kislovodsk and Pyatigorsk in January 1943, they pass under their agent pseudonyms ("sources"): "*Suvorovsky*", "*Orlov*", "*Sobolev*", "*Yakovlev*" and others, in all – 8 people<sup>11</sup>.

After the liberation of Stavropolsky krai from the German invaders, i.e. since January 1943, the officials of the state security bodies had to solve one more important and difficult problem. It was necessary to search for the accomplices of German invaders from among the Soviet citizens who committed grave crimes. Many of these collaborators participated in the tortures and mass executions of peaceful Soviet citizens, partisans, communists and NKVD officials. They had different motives and actions, as a result of which they found themselves among the traitors of the Motherland. According to the personal data that fell into the hands of the NKVD officials after the expulsion of the invaders, these were German agents recruited by the Abwehr even before the Great Patriotic War; former officers-White Guards; criminals who had already served their sentence or had escaped it because of the outbreak of hostilities; prisoners of war and commanders of the Red Army, who could not stand tortures in German concentration camps; the servicemen who had been encircled by the Germans, including officers and cadets of the Poltava Tractor and Novochoerkassk Cavalry Schools, who took part in the battles for the Caucasian Mineral Waters at the beginning of August, 1942; students of the universities evacuated to Pyatigorsk and Kislovodsk; the locals.

As the subsequent development of events has shown, the search, exposure and bringing to trial of former collaborators had been dragging on for the long post-war decades. In the course of the Great Patriotic War, the officials of the state security bodies of Stavropolsky krai found 572 traitors, accomplices and henchmen of the German occupation authorities. Trying to escape from the exposure and subsequent severe punishment, former accomplices of the German invaders used the most sophisticated ways and

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<sup>11</sup> *Архивы УФСБ РФ по Ставропольскому краю. Открытые источники*, д. 5, с. 88.

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methods of disguise and transformation: they changed their names and personal data, changed their appearance, moved to remote eastern regions of the country, changed their citizenship and left for a permanent place of residence outside the USSR.

The fact that this work for the chekists of Stavropolsky krai had to stretch on for many years is evidenced by the statistics that allow us to determine the approximate number of collaborators. So, only in Pyatigorsk, according to captured lists, about 700 people served in various departments and divisions of the city police from August, 1942 until early January, 1943. As a result of scrupulous work of the regional chekists the names of 250 former policemen were ascertained in the post-war years. 172 of them were brought to trial for their traitorous practice. 60 former collaborators escaped punishment due to natural death, 7 people managed to go abroad. For example, by operational and investigative measures in March, 1956 it was established that the former head of Hitler's concentration camp and the city prison of Pyatigorsk, A.M. Tumanov (Tumanishvili) left in 1947 from Italy for a permanent residence in Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. In the early 1960s, the KGB (the Committee for State Security) officers found about 100 people, former policemen, on the territory of Stavropolsky krai<sup>11</sup>. In accordance with their criminal cases, the chekists performed investigative actions with the subsequent transfer of the cases to the court and carrying out just and severe retaliation to the former accomplices of the German invaders.

For example, in Pyatigorsk in March 1961, the case of the former accomplice of the German invaders A.A. Kolesnikov was heard in the open court-martial of the North Caucasian Military District. At the beginning of August, 1942, he deserted from the Red Army and voluntarily collaborated with the enemy. Later he was appointed head of the 3rd department of the secret police in Pyatigorsk, where he zealously followed the instructions of the Hitlerites to expose and subsequently exterminate Soviet people.

The testimony of numerous witnesses, as well as the reliability and objectivity of the evidence base, became the ground for finding A.A. Kolesnikov guilty of the committed bloody crimes. The court-martial of the North Caucasian Military District sentenced the former accomplice of the German invaders to death penalty by shooting<sup>12</sup>. Once again, thanks to the hard work of the KGB officers in Stavropolsky krai, just retribution was accomplished.

In the city of Mineralnye Vody, during 13 days, from January 31 to February 12, 1966, the court-martial of the North Caucasian Military District heard the cases of the traitors to the Motherland, former policemen who committed bloody crimes in the Caucasian Mineral Waters during the

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<sup>12</sup> *Архивы УФСБ РФ по Ставропольскому краю. Открытые источники*, д. 3, с. 141-143.

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German occupation. Before that, for several years the chekists of Stavropolsky krai had searched for the accused, then they conducted investigative operations, during which they received irrefutable evidence of their criminal acts. Former accomplices of the Hitlerites M.P. Gab, E.F. Zavadsky, K.N. Naumenko, T.L. Tarasov and G.P. Bozhko were sentenced to capital punishment by shooting. And only one defendant – P.I. Grishan, – was sentenced to 15 years in prison. The military tribunal deprived him of his awards and military rank, the junior lieutenant of the reserve, and also confiscated all his property<sup>13</sup>.

In 1971-1972 the officers of the KGB Directorate for Stavropolsky krai conducted a preliminary investigation into the case of the former policemen of Pyatigorsk who served in the company of the police reserve in 1942-1943. «*During the occupation of the city the accused took a direct part in the mass shooting and killing of Soviet citizens in the gas chambers, called "dushbegubka"*», – it is mentioned in the materials of the investigation. On June 6, 1972, the court-martial of the North Caucasian Military District sentenced the former commander of the reserve police company P.V. Puzak, platoon commander V.M. Lozovoy, the chief of Pyatigorsk reserve mounted police F.M. Shiyarov and the common soldier of the reserve police company A.S. Novikov to capital punishment. The other six defendants, the former policemen of the reserve company, were sentenced to imprisonment from 10 to 15 years<sup>14</sup>.

Positive work of Stavropol chekists connected with the search for former collaborators and the exposure of their criminal activities during the Great Patriotic War would have been impossible without the active assistance of all Soviet people. Such help was given in various forms. First of all, by the reports from the witnesses of the wartime events to the state security bodies about the accidentally identified former accomplices of the German invaders. Secondly, by testimony during the investigation of witnesses of crimes committed by collaborators. Typical in this regard is the case that occurred in Stavropol in the spring of 1976. On the town market, a local resident, the participant of the Great Patriotic War V.Ya. Fedchenko recognized in the seller of honey his former co-worker A.I. Sukhachev. They were captured at the beginning of the war and they both were in a German concentration camp. Here A.I. Sukhachev soon offered his services to the Hitlerites and was enlisted in the guard of the camp. Later, the traitor "... for his loyal service to the Nazis was awarded a medal and the officer's rank of the German

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<sup>13</sup> M. Fenenko, *The trial of the traitors to the Motherland. The retribution has come*. Kavkazskaya Zdravnitsa, 1966

<sup>14</sup> А. Попутько, *Пять месяцев в аду: Оккупация Пятигорска во время Великой Отечественной войны*. Ставропольская правда, 2003.



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*punitive organs SD (Security Service). ... Then he was a secret member of the SD in Germany. Up to its collapse”<sup>15</sup>.*

All these details of the traitorous biography of A.I. Sukhachev began to come out after his arrest by the KGB officers in Stavropolsky krai and subsequent interrogations. Then the former Hitlerite accomplice was sent to the city of Smolensk. Here and in neighbouring Belarus during the Great Patriotic War, A.I. Sukhachev committed his crimes. In October 1976, the court sentenced him to the death penalty by shooting<sup>15</sup>.

Searching for war criminals guilty of the death of tens of thousands of Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War, the chekists of Stavropol entered the international level in the case of operational necessity. So, according to the archives, in the early 70's they started collecting information about the criminal activities of the former member of the punitive Einsatzkommando-12 SD Herbert Drabant<sup>16</sup>. He committed his bloody atrocities in several regions of the USSR occupied by the German troops, including the territory of Stavropolsky krai in the second half of 1942. In particular, this war criminal participated in the execution of almost 4,000 citizens of Jewish nationality in Stavropol during the period from August 12 to 16, 1942. Then the bloody trail of Drabant passed through Mineralnye Vody and Budennovsk, where, being a member of Einsatzkommando-12, he took part in the tortures and mass executions of Soviet people. In thirty years after the end of the Great Patriotic War, thanks to the cooperation of the KGB Directorate for Stavropolsky krai with their colleagues from the GDR, the criminal was found in one of the cities of East Germany. In August 1976, a trial of a Nazi criminal was held in Berlin, it sentenced Herbert Drabant for his numerous crimes to life imprisonment.

### **Conclusions**

Summing up what had been said we can note that the state security bodies of Stavropolsky krai took intensive measures to counteract the German special services actions. In addition, the chekists made an invaluable contribution to the deployment of destruction battalions in the towns and districts of the region, on the base of which partisan units were later created with their help. During the temporary occupation of the territory of Stavropolsky krai by German troops, the officials of the state security bodies carried out audacious reconnaissance operations behind enemy lines, revealing the distribution of German troops and collaborationist forces, determining the administrative and economic policies of the enemy in the occupied territories. They bravely fought in the partisan units of Stavropolsky

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<sup>15</sup> Ю. Христинин, *Работы в газете «Ставропольская правда», 1976.*

<sup>16</sup> *Архивы УФСБ РФ по Ставропольскому краю. Открытые источники, д. 1, с. 1.*

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krai and in special detachments, defending the passes of the Main Caucasian Range.

During the Great Patriotic War and especially in the post-war decades, the chekists of Stavropol carried out hard work in order to identify former accomplices of German invaders who were guilty of the death of tens of thousands of Soviet citizens. This work involved the interview of thousands of witnesses and eyewitnesses of the bloody events in the war years, the study of numerous archival and other documents, and, ultimately, the exposure of the hiding former collaborators. Many of them have already suffered a well-deserved punishment for their crimes, as evidenced by the materials of the trials, a small part of which is given in this article. The work of security agents in Stavropolsky krai connected with the exposure of war criminals continues up to the present, since there is no statute of limitations for such crimes against humanity.