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THE USSR'S UNLUCKY SPY

Khairoullam Shalkarov is one of the world's ugliest and unluckiest Soviet citizens. He has now achieved the remarkable feat of being caught out in no fewer than three S.E. Asian countries.

On May 21st the Ceylonese Government declared him persona non grata, and his intriguing assignment as 2nd Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Colombo came to an untimely end. The Ceylonese Government explained its action by saying that he is a Soviet intelligence agent who had worked as a military adviser in Laos under the alias of Colonel Khakunov (United Press, 21 May 1965). The Ceylonese press added the information that Shalkarov had interfered in the recent elections in Ceylon.

If this allegation is true, it must be noted that Shalkarov is an ineffective as well as an unskillful agent, since the elections led to the fall of Ceylon's left-oriented Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and its replacement by the new National Government under Mr. Dudley Senanayake, the leader of the United National Party.

Seven years ago, Shalkarov was masquerading as a diplomat in Thailand, from which country he was eventually expelled for "activities most dangerous to security and peace" (UPI, October 6th, 1958). Why he chose to use his Thailand cover-name a second time in Ceylon will presumably never be known in the West. But it does argue a considerable lack of finesse in the departments of G.R.U. (Glavnoye Razvedyvatelnoye Upravleniye) which are concerned with the provision of cover stories for Soviet military intelligence officers.

It is true that Shalkarov can claim to be the first Soviet agent expelled by the Senanayake regime, which has already removed two Chinese Embassy officials (by withdrawing their residence permits), ten E. Germans, nine N. Koreans and two N. Vietnamese (Reuter, 23 April 1965). But no public charges have

been made against the E. German or the E. Asian communist diplomats, who were merely told that the staffs of their embassies were far in excess of legitimate requirements.

Shalkarov's third consecutive failure is a much more serious affair both because of the damage done to his country's diplomatic reputation and the shoddy light which it sheds on the efficiency of GRU's passport forging department. It is not at present known who is the head of GRU, but surely this is a case in which Shelepin, widely believed in the West to be in overall charge of the Soviet security services, Semichastny (the head of the KGB) and Malinovsky, who must have an interest in the proper functioning of his military espionage department, should either combine to retire Shalkarov once and for all or at least provide him with a more original alias for his next mission.

Of the two possible courses open to them, in the case of such a notoriously exposure-prone agent as Shalkarov, a discreet pension to allow him to go and grow roses would surely be the better part of valour.

r.r.g.