



By: *Sergei Stepancev, TA Moscow*

Who will succeed Putin? Technocrats or spycrats?



The question everyone is asking is who will come after Putin. There is much talk of Putin's young so called technocrats. The use of the word technocracy is wrong. Spycracy is a much more accurate terminology. In a very detailed article in the Wall Street Journal, Benoit Faucon describes the skyrocketing and brilliant career of Pavel Sorokin, the Russian deputy energy minister. He wrote that well-educated Russian technocrats with deep knowledge of the west are now Putin's key weapons in the fight against western pressure and western sanctions.

However, although one episode of Mr. Sorokin's background has been covered in that article, it has not been fully interpreted from a soviet and Russian standpoint. Before we examine Pavel Sorokin's interesting career, we should recall the famous Anna Chapman. Anna was born in 1982. Her father was a diplomat working in one of the soviet embassies in Africa: in Kenya. Anna Chapman's father was a confirmed intelligence officer, stationed in Nairobi. Unlike Anna Chapman, Mr. Sorokin was born overseas in Cyprus at about the time the USSR collapsed. Back in the soviet days, all soviet diplomats were at least part-time spies. Things have not changed much since then. It is no wonder that Mr. Sorokin is now so Russophile and patriotic, as well as critical of the 1990s. The late 1980s and early 1990s were dark days for soviet operatives when the soviet system crumbled.

Comfortable life of Soviet diplomats

That was when the comfortable lives of Soviet diplomats and spies was over. That was when a new era began with Perestroika and Glasnost. Those were horrible days for most soviet operatives and functionaries. That atmosphere of uncertainty his family experienced back then most definitively defined Mr. Sorokin's future life and world view. By the late 1990s, Russian intelligence readjusted, and was able to marry Russian organised crime and the orthodox church in the Russian federation, which is the Russki Orthodox Church. Since

then, the intelligence services in Russia have successfully been intensifying their grip on the Russian economy and, something the KGB knew best, been recruiting and subverting enemy states around the globe. From an early age and thereafter, Mr. Sorokin was probably exposed to patriotic and anti-western sentiments in his family of soviet diplomats, while being exposed to the western lifestyle, the language and the culture.

Putin loves to hire spies and children of spies

President Putin loves to hire spies or children of spies. Regardless of the level of the intelligence background of the parents, Vladimir Putin loves to use children of soviet and Russian intelligence operatives, because not only were those children bred in the correct atmosphere from Putin's standpoint, but also because those children knew that they were privileged to have a shortcut in their career due to the intelligence affiliations of their parents. Putin loves those who experience obligation to Putin. These children of soviet spies have not only absorbed their parents' grievances regarding the wasted great country of the USSR, but also these children from early age experienced the pleasure of being privileged and are thus grateful to the country which provided them the ability to be privileged.

People like Mr. Sorokin can be smart, educated and bright. Most importantly, they are literally operatives by birth. Their parents made a choice to become spies. In reality, back in the day the choice was made by the agency. Nevertheless, their parents willfully accepted an offer to become intelligence operatives when they were already grown people. Children like Anna Chapman and most possibly Pavel Sorokin have been operatives since childhood. From their early days of life, they were exposed to militant intelligence-style patriotism and the espionage way of life their parents were leading. They knew what could be said and what could not be said in public or could not even be mentioned out loud at

home, because it would be unsafe: enemies are all around; bugs can be installed. The soviet cast of embassy workers Mr. Sorokin was part of was a separate world. These people were waging a few wars at the same time. First, they were on the territory of an enemy state, or at least on a territory where an enemy was present. At the same time, they were fighting one another to advance their careers and get promotion from Moscow.

From their part, this required intrigues, denunciations, spying on their comrades and all imaginable and unimaginable dirty tricks. Obviously their children were at least witnessing that. In many cases they were involved, because children of embassy personnel interacted with the children of other embassy personnel. In many cases kids were playing together, while their parents were sending Moscow denunciations of each other. In some cases, children were involved in intertribal embassy wars, helping parents to know what people were saying in the other camp. When these children grow up, they usually get used by the same system their parents were in, simply because these children already have some needed connections, and most importantly are already familiar with the rules of the game.

Intelligence is a different league

Back in the USSR and in today's Russia, an affiliation with the intelligence service is a free pass to a better, more convenient and fruitful life. It helps a child even if (s)he is not following a parent's direct intelligence foot prints. In business or in government echelons, the good-old affiliation with intelligence helps in today's Russia. Intelligence is a different Russian league. They are the best of the best in today's Russia. All doors are open to operatives, and those doors can only be closed by those who are equal to them. President Putin is an officer. Key people around him are officers or they are children of officers. These people are privileged in Russia. These people are, from early days, exposed to and familiarised with how to exercise Machiavellianism, KGB/FSB style.

These people, however, have never been exposed to real free market competition. Andrey Romanenko, Sorokin, Anna Chapman and even Dmitri Patrushev, the head of Russian ministry of Agriculture, can all be talented and bright people, but they have never competed in fair conditions. They have had a joker in the pack other people may not have. A joker provided to them by their parents' intelligence affiliations. Therefore, no one should overestimate Putin's young technocrats because they were given the privilege. Unlike Putin himself or, for example, Abramovich, these young people are around only because someone in their family has a KGB ID card. Intelligence affiliation is their domestic advantage, and therefore international weakness.