

Kostyrchenko, G., *V plenu u krasnogo faraona: politicheskie presledovaniya evreev v SSSR v poslednee stalinskoe desiatiletie: dokumentalnoe issledovanie* [‘Imprisoned by the red pharaoh: political persecution of Jews in the USSR during Stalin’s last decade: documentary research’] (Moscow, 1994: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya), 331–2

IB dictated the following remarks on this passage in 1995:

After some lines about the fate of the physician who looked after V. M. Molotov’s wife, we get the following:

‘After several interrogations, Vinogradov “confessed” that M. B. Kogan, until he died of cancer on 26 November 1951, demanded from him information about the condition of the health and general situation in the families of Stalin and other administrators of the country, whose physician he was.

‘During the following years, according to the primitively invented interrogation, the function of the “curator” [think that means the person attached by the KGB to watch someone else] Vinogradov – in connection with a “secret order from London” – were assigned to Professor M. E. Pevzner, director of the clinic of Medical Diatetics of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR. He, so it turned out, having gone on an official visit at the beginning of the 1930s to Carlsbad, there became involved in a net of spies ingeniously organised by his relative, a certain Mendel Berlin, an emigrant from Russia who had British nationality. According to the same retrospective scenario developed some time before in the Lyubanka [Centre of the Soviet secret police], the brother of M. Berlin, a Soviet citizen, Professor of Medicine L. B. Berlin, was soon made to penetrate Pevzner’s Clinic for the purpose of direct control over him, and also as a contact with a resident English spy-ring in Moscow. He begins to work in this section. This latter [Professor L. B. Berlin], having met, in December 1945, the son of his London brother Mendel, Isaiah, who arrived to work in Moscow as a Second Secretary of the British Embassy, arranges through him a regular method of sending secret information abroad. In this way the channel of the spy-ring, which contains, in its first stage, the following links of the chain – V. N. Vinogradov, M. B. Kogan, M. E. Pevzner, L. B. Berlin, Isaiah Berlin – begins to function as a channel of intelligence. After 1950, in connection with the death of M. B. Kogan, Vinogradov began direct contact with Pevzner. This was the more convenient because Pevzner was a member of the editorial committee of the journal *Therapeutic Archive*, the head of which was Vinogradov.

‘In order to prop up this elaborate piece of falsification, L. B. Berlin (the Professor of Diatetic Medicine) was returned on 10 December 1952 to Moscow from the Taishet camp. At the first interrogation, which lasted till 14 December, the interrogators Sokolov and Pantaleev, who accused him of concealing at his earlier interrogation his activity as a spy, said to him, quite openly, that they will use [a] measure of physical compulsion if he does not confess the passing of information received from Vinogradov to the nephew Isaiah at the British Embassy.

‘Berlin refused to “confess” such participation on his part and that of Vinogradov. Then he was taken to the private office of the head of the “inner” prison, where it was normal to beat prisoners for four days. However, this did not work, and consequently Berlin, who had suffered this frightful treatment with stoicism, was removed for a more thorough “working

over” to the Lefortov prison. There he was subjected to such elaborate tortures that he made several attempts to commit suicide. After that, for several days his hands were manacled. In the end, the victim was “broken”, and forced to give the required evidence about collaboration with the British intelligence service, beginning from the moment when he was persuaded to join, in 1936, and ending with his arrest in 1952. Berlin was held in prison for one more year, and liberated on 4 February 1954, by order of the Minister of Internal Affairs, S. N. Kruglov.’

The rest of this page is concerned with other false accusations of spying, against various well-known and less-known persons, the list of whom is given. This, of course, is news to me. My father, Mendel Berlin, was a timber merchant who came to England from Riga in 1919, and did make one journey to the Soviet Union, in connection with timber export, in 1934 or 1935, when he did see his brother Lev Borisovich Berlin, the medical professor. Needless to say, he was not connected with intelligence in England or any other country, at any point of his life; nor was his unfortunate brother, the professor. I found myself in Moscow as a temporary First Secretary of the British Embassy in 1945, and did pay a visit – I now think very unwisely – to the flat in which two of my uncles (one of them the professor) were then living with their wives and children. There was only one such visit, but it became plain to me even then that this could only lead to trouble for them. I do not think that the rest of the family, which I visited, were actually arrested – of course, I do not know this for certain. But I did learn from my great friend, the famous poetess Anna Akhmatova, who followed the fortunes of my family in Moscow, that Professor Berlin was duly arrested in 1952 – as I thought, as part of the notorious Jewish Doctors’ Plot against Stalin and other Soviet leaders; I think they were accused of murdering the writer Maksim Gorky, who in fact died of TB. I did not, of course, know about the interrogations, tortures etc.; but I did know, from the same Akhmatova, that my uncle died in Moscow at liberty (there was a little obituary of him in the Moscow evening papers). I discovered from some of his near relations who emigrated to Israel two years ago (I am writing this in 1995), that when at liberty he was walking along a street in Moscow and, on the other side of the pavement, saw the man who had interrogated and tortured him: whereupon he had a heart attack and died in the street there and then. I have no idea who Vinogradov, or any of the other characters referred to, are, or were.

This seems to me a typical piece of KGB invention and falsification, from beginning to end. no. doubt the fact that I was a British official in Moscow was sufficient to identify me as an intelligence agent, since all foreign diplomats were regarded as such – at that [time], and indeed earlier and later times. My father died in ignorance of this entire story. Needless to add, I never worked for any intelligence organisation, British or any other, at any point in my life, and had no contact with any such bodies, when I was a British Embassy official during the war or at any other time. But I fear that the awful fate of my uncle L. B. Berlin must be directly connected with the fact that I was his nephew and had worked in the British Embassy in Moscow and was of Russian origin.