Tscherim Soobzokov
Richard Breitman
American University

Tscherim Soobzokov served Nazi Germany, Jordan, and the United States in succession. He worked for the CIA for about seven years (1952-59). Severely injured by a pipe bomb placed outside his house in Paterson, New Jersey on August 15, 1985, he died three weeks later. His still unsolved murder was likely connected with his controversial past, illuminated in his newly declassified CIA file and other related files.

In August 1942 an SS or SD (Security Service) officer with German forces invading the North Caucasus Mountain region of the Soviet Union recruited Soobzokov. He then became chief of police in his home town of Tachtamukai and a member of the Field Gendarmerie. He later mentioned that he was attached to SS troops.¹ Eventually, under the pressure of repeated CIA polygraph examinations, he also conceded that he had participated in an execution commando and had searched North Caucasian villages for Jews and Komsomol (Young Communist) members.²

In 1943-44 Soobzokov recruited reliable Circassians for an SS-sponsored Caucasian Legion. In early 1945 he received appointment as a first lieutenant in the Waffen-SS, the military branch of the SS.

¹ SA John Joseph Reid, Jr. to SAC, Newark, December 5, 1961, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group 65, Classification 105, Box 168, HQ 105-71208-Bulky 13. It appears that the Waffen-SS Division Wiking was the first German unit to reach the region in which Tachtamukai was located. Erich Kern, Der grosse Rausch: das Buch der Ostfront (Waiblingen, 1950), 91-92.
² A German wartime document, a copy of which is in Soobzokov’s CIA file, shows that he was authorized to search all villages in the area. See attached document. Soobzokov’s admission that his purpose was to look for Jews and Komsomol members is first mentioned explicitly in a July 19, 1974 memo written by Soobzokov’s former supervisor in the CIA. The date when Soobzokov admitted it is not clear from the file, which is incomplete. There are, however, earlier hints of his purpose in Soobzokov’s 1958 Biography of an Emigrant, a copy of which is also in NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File. The CIA polygraphed Soobzokov seven times; four of the exam findings survive in this newly declassified file.
With the help of the International Refugee Organization, he and a group of about 200 Circassians emigrated from Italy to Jordan in 1947. Soobzokov worked for a time as an agricultural engineer for the Iraq Petroleum Company and then for the city of Amman.

The CIA recruited Soobzokov (who was given the codename “Nostril”) in Jordan as an informant and as a spotter of Circassians who might be sent on missions to infiltrate the Soviet Caucasus. After he was polygraphed, a CIA official noted in early 1953: “Subject has consistent and pronounced reactions to all questions regarding war crimes, and is, no doubt, hiding a number of activities from us on that point.” But “clear evidence of a war crimes record might also serve as a possible control.” Given CIA employment in Jordan for several years, Soobzokov continued to work part-time for the CIA after he emigrated to the U.S. with his family in June 1955. In August 1958 Soobzokov also began to serve as a source for the FBI.  

Another CIA polygraph and debriefing of Soobzokov led a CIA examiner to determine that he “was an incorrigible fabricator … who could not afford to tell the complete truth about his past without seriously jeopardizing his future.” As a result, Soobzokov was severed from CIA in January 1960.

Nonetheless, Soobzokov obtained American citizenship. On Sept. 27, 1960 and December 6, 1960 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) asked CIA for any derogatory information on Soobzokov in its files. CIA responded that they had no derogatory information on Soobzokov that would preclude his naturalization.  

3 Chief of Base, Pullach to Chief, NR, March 19, 1953, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File
4 SAC Newark to Director FBI, Aug. 27, 1958, NARA, RG 65, Classification 105, Box 168.
5 Chief, Interrogation Research Division, CIA, to Chief, Security Support Division, December 14, 1959, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File. See attached document excerpt.
6 He became an American citizen on April 17, 1961. NARA, RG 85, Soobzokov INS File. See attached document.
During the 1960s accusations that Soobzokov had committed war crimes for the Nazis emerged from within the faction-ridden Circassian community of northern New Jersey, but FBI investigators could not obtain solid evidence against him. In 1974 Soobzokov was listed publicly as one of a number of Nazi war criminals in the U. S. Soobzokov turned to a previous CIA superior for advice and assistance against an investigation opened by INS. In August 1975 the CIA’s Deputy Director of Operations wrote the INS that, although the CIA had “unresolved doubts” about Soobzokov, it had no evidence he was involved in war crimes during his work for the German army, and “during the seven years he worked for this Agency, Subject did perform useful service in the United States Government, and ... he did volunteer for extremely hazardous missions.”


In 1980 the new Office of Special Investigations in the Justice Department dropped its denaturalization case against Soobzokov after the CIA found in its files a State Department form on which Soobzokov, in 1952, had listed accurately some (not all) of his Nazi connections at the time he applied for a visa. In support of Soobzokov’s application, however, in 1953 the CIA had sent the State Department one of Soobzokov’s

---

7 Deputy Director for Operations, CIA, to Commissioner, INS, August 1975, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File.
8 Footnote INS file.
9 OSI apparently did not believe it could prove that Soobzokov had lied to gain entrance to the U. S. The CIA copy of the State Department V-30 form, dated August 19, 1952, is in Soobzokov’s CIA name file, NARA, RG 263.
mendacious versions, according to which he served in the Soviet army, surrendered to the Germans, and spent the war as a POW.\textsuperscript{10}

The CIA showed bad judgment in employing and assisting a man who served as an officer in a criminal organization, admitted having committed some war crimes, and consistently lied about his past.

\textsuperscript{10} Deputy Director for Plans, CIA, to Secretary of State, Attention Stanley Smigel, November 16, 1953, NARA, RG 263, Soobzokov Name File.
The Mayor of the area

TACHTAMUKAI

date 30.12.1942

PERMIT

The Oberleutnant and Chief of the Circassian Field Police Tcherim SCOBZOKOV born on 1.1.1913 in Tachtamukai, North Caucasus is authorized to search all villages in my area.

Authority: Special order from German Field Command No. 548 of 26.12.1942 E/No. 704/42.

This permit is valid together with soldier book No. 145763 issued by the commanding officer of the SS and SD Bureau in Krasnodar on 15.10.42.

The Mayor (signature) /Chatit/

SEAL

Secretary (signature) /Schaudjan/
Attention: DEPUTY DIRECTOR, PLANS

Please furnish any derogatory information that may be contained in your files concerning the following person.

NAME (Surname in CAPS, First, Middle)

SOOBZOKOV, TSCHERIM

ALIASES (Identify maiden name or nicknames)

SHOWABZOAQ, ABDUL-KARIM

HEIGHT

WEIGHT

EYES

HAIR

COMPLEXION

IDENTIFYING MARKS OR SCARS

5'11½" 175 Brown black Fair None

PLACE OF BIRTH (City, province or state & country)

SEX

COLOE

MARRITAL STATUS

ISSR

DATE OF BIRTH

8/21/24

PRESENT NATIONALITY

Jordan

ISSR

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

47 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

PRIOR OCCUPATIONS (Not included in above)

OCCUPATION OR PROFESSION

FROM

TO

5/60

Color Plasmar Co., Paterson, N.J.

Mutual Life Ins. Co., NYC

present

5/59

6/55

SPouse (Full name & any other names used, & present address, if not same as above)

DATE OF BIRTH

PLACE OF BIRTH (City, province or state & country)

5/27/26

ISSR

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

47 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd St., Paterson, N.J.

58 No. 3rd Ave., Paterson, N.J.
Commissioner (COINV)  
Washington, D. C.  
A10 083 288  
July 24, 1974

District Director (DIINV)  
Newark, New Jersey

SOZERKOV, Tscherem, Alleged Nazi War Criminal

Through Official Channels

The Subject entered the United States as a lawful permanent resident on June 28, 1955 at New York, New York. His immigrant visa was issued by the American Embassy, Amman, Jordan. It contains a certificate by an unknown person attesting to the birth of the Subject in Tachtamihal, Caucasus, Russia, on January 1, 1918. His birth date is reflected as such in his file until 1960 when he petitioned for citizenship. At that time it is given as August 24, 1924.

This difference in birth dates was reported in a news article in the New York Daily News on July 15, 1974 by reporter Paul Meckel who also contacted the Subject and asked him to explain the differences. The Subject would not respond to his question.

On several occasions the Subject has contacted this office to ascertain the progress of the investigation and to denounce the articles appearing in the area newspapers. On more than one occasion he has stated that if the Service would contact the Central Intelligence Agency all of the questions about his birth date and past activities would be answered. He claims that he has been active with that Agency since 1955.

As stated previously the Subject submitted a form G-135 on September 27, 1960 relative to his petition for citizenship. A copy of this form was forwarded to the C.I.A., but no response was received. An additional form dated December 6, 1960 was submitted, concerning which, the Agency contacted the Assistant District Director, Washington, D. C. questioning the reason for the request. This office responded directly to that Agency who returned the Form G-135a stating they had no derogatory information concerning the Subject that would preclude him from becoming naturalized. A copy of each of the foregoing is attached for your ready reference.

In view of the high priority placed on this investigation it is requested that the Director, Central Intelligence Agency be contacted to determine if their records concerning the Subject contain any information that could be of assistance to this Service, and whether or not it could be made available to us.

FOR THE DISTRICT DIRECTOR

[Signature]

Assistant District Director, Int.
TO: Chief, Security Support Division

DATE: 14 December 1959

ATTN: P

FROM: Chief, Interrogation Research Division

SUBJECT: S.F. #7367

IRB #25817

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Subject of this report is a thirty-five-year-old married male, an alien of Circassian origin, who has been covertly utilized by this Agency since 1952.

2. Subject was previously polygraphed on: 23 February 1953; 25 February 1956; 13 December 1956; 24 August 1957; 17 October 1957 (by two different examiners); and 22 April 1958. After the April 1958 polygraph interview (which was specific in scope and did not touch on questions dealing with Subject's bona fides), IRD recommended a thorough debriefing of Subject at the first opportunity. This recommendation was concurred in by the CI Staff, and consequently, the SR/DOB interrogation specialist II attempted to resolve the discrepancies considered to exist in Subject's autobiography.

3. The result of the SR/DOB debriefing is contained in Attachment "A." A review of this SR/DOB debriefing by IRD disclosed vague generalities and certain inconsistencies. Furthermore, some of the given facts were found to be at variance with known Soviet reality. This review was made a matter of record by IRD through a memorandum to the CI Staff (see Attachment "B").

4. Subject was currently debriefed and polygraphed at a covert site in Washington, D.C. on 19 and 20 November 1959 at the request of IRD. The debriefing was based on a requirement, submitted by CI/CA, stipulating that prior to renewing Subject's QA, Subject would have to clarify and explain satisfactorily discrepancies evident in his autobiography. The entire interview was conducted in the Russian language.

PURPOSE

1. The purpose of the current debriefing was to resolve the discrepancies still apparent in Subject's personal history. Although Subject had previously undergone many interrogations, both with and without the aid of the polygraph, it was still evident, from a review of his file,
including his latest straight debriefing conducted by SR/DOB in October
1959, that Subject continued to fabricate certain parts of his past. If,
at the completion of this debriefing, the examiner obtained new pertinent
information about Subject, the latter would then be given a polygraph
test to check out the validity of the newly acquired information.

2. At the start of the first day's debriefing, Subject was informed
of its (the debriefing's) purpose. He was cautioned that a repetition
of his previous attempts at deception would not be beneficial to him or
to his future. Subject said that he fully understood the importance of
the debriefing session and assured the examiner that "not one single
word of untruth would come from his lips during the current interview.

3. Subject reiterated his previously given reasons for his fabrica-
tions and attempts at deception. (Noted in IRD #29077 reports dated:
27 August 1957, paragraph III, sub-paragraph 2a; May 1958, paragraph III;
sub-paragraph 1d; SR/DOB debriefing report, dated 22 October 1958, page
16, last paragraph.) However, he strongly emphasized the fact that his
biography, as given to C (SR/DOB debriefing, October 1958), was the
absolute truth.

4. In answer to the questions of how he was able, in the past, to
be so consistent in giving a deceitful autobiography, Subject stated that
he always had an "outlining form" where the main points of his false auto-
biography were recorded. Consequently, whenever he was called upon to
submit facts about his personal history, he would always refer to this
"outlining form" and come up with a consistent (fabricated) autobiography.
Subject was asked whether he had in his possession, this "outlining form." He
replied in the negative.

5. The entire first day, 19 November, was spent debriefing Subject
on his past in the Soviet Union and Germany up to 1945. It became evi-
dent after the first hour of debriefing that the information Subject
was contributing (to the examiner) did not correspond with the informa-
tion he gave C in the last debriefing. Subject was allowed to give
his version of each phase of his life. When he concluded each phase,
he would be confronted with and questioned about the discrepancies exi-
isting between the information he gave the examiner, and that which he
had given C. In some cases he stated that he lied to C, and that
the current version was the true one; in other instances, when confronted
with conflicting versions, he would try to squirm out of the situation by
attempting to give an explanation for the conflict. This explanation was
usually very weak at times, completely illogical and unconvincing; and,
in other instances, an out-and-out lie.
6. At the conclusion of the first day's debriefing, after subject was confronted with numerous facts which reflected that his current autobiographical version was in conflict with information previously given by him, he begged that he be given some time to think and consolidate his thoughts and facts about his past—in fact, he offered to spend the night of 19 November writing his autobiography. The examiner agreed and debriefing was terminated for that day.

7. When subject came in on 20 November, he referred to some rough notes which he had scribbled the night before (he had not written out a complete autobiography as he had promised) and repeated the same basic autobiographical version, specifically concerning the area in which he was caught lying the day before. The examiner was convinced beyond all doubt that subject had again reverted to the use of his "outline form" to refresh his memory. Subject, however, denied that he consulted or made reference to any "form" to refresh his memory.

RESULTS OF THE INTERVIEW

The following additional information, developed during subject's current debriefing, is set down in synopsis form. In elaboration and the details relating to each of the points noted is contained in the "Details of the Report" section.

a. Subject admitted that he was recruited by German Intelligence in 1942 to work as their informer against the Cossacks (his own people).

b. Subject said he was instructed by a representative of German Intelligence in 1942, to "volunteer" for service with the 85th Cossack Battalion so that he could perform his "informants' duties more efficiently.

c. Subject admitted to current correspondence with his relatives and friends, and with his wife's relatives in USSR (since late 1957).

d. Subject stated that he was never in Belostok as he previously claimed, but was somewhere in the Vil'naus Oblast while serving his one-year prison sentence (from 1940 to 1941).

e. Subject admitted that he falsified the extent of his education.
Subject admitted that he was a semi-deserter from the German Army for eleven months after his release from the hospital in the summer of 1943.

Minor unresolved discrepancies noted in the "Details of the Report" section.

Continued unresolved discrepancies regarding his activities while under German jurisdiction (1943-1945).

CONCLUSION

1. On the basis of current debriefing and polygraph testing, as well as from observation of Subject's behavior during this debriefing, it is the examiner's opinion that Subject is an incorrigible fabricator who is still attempting deception about his past.

2. Subject's explanation for initially attempting to falsify and fabricate part of his autobiography to the Americans may have been originally understandable in light of the existing circumstances, as Subject explained them. It was his desire to increase his (Subject's) personal stature and importance in the eyes of those (Germans and Americans) interested in utilizing him. Subject also wished to maintain continuity with his previously given false autobiographical version (to the Americans in Annex) so that he could immigrate to the United States (Reference: SR/DOB debriefing, dated October 1958, page 15, paragraph 1-3, Attach. MM). However, the above points cannot be accepted, at this time, as reasons for his continued attempts at deception to the American authorities. At present, there is no one left to impress with Subject's non-existent stature and capability; neither is there any necessity to maintain continuity of a fabricated autobiographical version to facilitate his entrance into the United States. As Subject himself informed this examiner, he now realizes and is convinced that American Intelligence is interested more in Subject's capabilities than in what Subject says he can do. Yet, even though Subject is aware of this existing situation—indeed, he has realized it since the August 1957 debriefing—and knows that further fabrication will not help his case, he persists in fabricating and attempting deception about his past during every session spent with him. He lied during his last two debriefing sessions, the SR/DOB debriefing in October 1958, and the first day (19 November 1959) of the current debriefing.

3. If Subject does not have the capacity or the inclination to relate only the unvarnished truth about himself and his past, and if he
S.F. #79367
11 December 1959

continues to falsify and fabricate about his past, then possibly a re-
appraisal of Subject should be considered prior to utilizing him in the
future.

4. The examiner can only draw one final conclusion about Subject
and his unceasing deceitful attempts during interrogation. The reason
why Subject is continuing deception about his background must be so im-
portant and pertinent to Subject's welfare that he cannot afford to
tell the complete truth about his past without seriously jeopardizing
his future.

5. No further polygraph testing of Subject is recommended. The
current polygraph testing was attempted only because Subject gave ad-
ditional data which heretofore he had not divulged. However, after
polygraph testing, it is still evident that Subject is practicing de-
ception.

DETAILS OF THE REPORT

1. Information obtained during the debriefing of Subject is set
forth in the same order as received from Subject with particular refer-
ce to the discrepancies as they were uncovered. To further underline
the extent of Subject's fabrications, these false versions are reported
in chronological order, in a side-by-side comparative form—i.e., the
current version, which is supposed to be the unvarnished truth, as com-
pared to the former versions (specifically the SR/DOB, October 1958
version), as well as other earlier statements made by Subject to his
debriefers.

DEBRIEFING ON 10 NOVEMBER 1957

Subject's Current Version

Name — Tacherim
Subject has a Jordanian passport
which lists his name as Abdul Karim
GHEWABECQ A (MR-ERD), H/A Tacherim

Date of Birth — 21 August 1921

Subject's Previous Versions

Some information on all other de-
briefings.

SR/DOB and August 1957 Debrief-
ings — 21 August 1921.

All debriefings prior to August
1957 — 1 January 1915