

The meeting made a striking impression on the high-ranking OGPU official, although he didn't tell Barchenko anything concrete. However, the Petrograd OGPU asked Barchenko to write an official letter directly to the board of the Central Apparatus of the OGPU, the weekly meeting of the leaders of the Soviet Union's repressive apparatus. The man who was to deliver the letter was the graphologist Konstantin Vladimirov,²⁴ a member of the Special Section of the OGPU. Barchenko remembered:

When he returned to Leningrad a few days later, Vladimirov told me that our affairs were going well, that I should travel to Moscow in order to explain our project to the leading OGPU members there. In Moscow, Vladimirov put me in touch with Agranov once again, whom we visited in his flat that was near the OGPU building. I did not make a note of the exact address.²⁵ During this meeting Agranov told me that it was intended to present my report about the closed scientific collective to the meeting of the Board of the OGPU. My proposal to establish contact with the keepers of the secrets of Shambhala in the East stood a chance of being approved and from now on I would need to maintain a business connection with the OGPU board member Bokii in this matter.²⁶

Iakov Agranov's invitation to visit him at home was a great honor for Barchenko and a sign of trust. The detached house on Miliutinsk Street was under close surveillance, constantly being watched by the secret police. The surveillance was carried out from the surrounding houses, in a neighbourhood that was home to many secret police workers.

Barchenko's message to Bokii contained a resumé of the mystical teachings of *Diunkhor*-Kalachakra, the central theme of which was Shambhala. In addition, Barchenko also presented his plan for expeditions to the enigmatic Shambhala. Fedor Leismer-Shvarts, another OGPU worker from Petrograd who had helped Barchenko, remembered: Barchenko handed me a parcel to bring to Bokii, which I did. Then I went to Moscow on my own. Vladimirov had left for Moscow the day before. I met him the next day and then we went to see Bokii together, where Vladimirov supplemented my information on Barchenko.²⁷

24 Konstantin Vladimirov (1883–1929) was an occultist and graphologist working for the VChK. In 1927, he was put under trial and executed in 1929. He has never been rehabilitated.

25 It was the house for high-ranking staff members on 9 Miliutinskii Street.

26 TsA FSB, transcript of the interrogation of A. Barchenko, 23 December 1937.

27 UFSB po SPB i Lenoblasti. [FSB Administration for St Petersburg and the Leningrad Region]. Protocol of the interrogation of K.F. Shvarts, 3 July, l. 79.

As we can see, Barchenko's acquaintance with Bokii was preceded by the Petrograd secret police painstakingly working with the Special Section itself, which was subordinated to the Party Central Committee. The Special Section's main area of activity was cryptography, but it also oversaw wide-ranging research carried out by the USSR's repressive organs. The scientific expedition proposed to them was not just a revolutionary measure for destabilizing Central Asia. This caravan also had exotic goals. And it was possible that the Central Committee and the OGPU Board would not understand these goals. But nevertheless Bokii made a decision. He was willing to support Barchenko's idea.

On the same day or the next day Vladimirov took me to Bokii, who subsequently put my paper on the agenda of the OGPU Board. The Board meeting was taking place late at night. Everyone was very tired so they did not pay attention to what I said. They were in a hurry to finish with the questions as soon as possible. As a result I managed to achieve, with the support of Bokii and Agranov, a positive resolution to the effect that Bokii would be instructed to study my project in detail and extract any value that might be in it.²⁸

The Board meeting and the approval of the decision were chaired by Dzerzhinskii. From this moment on, Barchenko no longer worked exclusively on expedition projects, but also in the OGPU's secret science centers. In the spring of 1925, the preparations for the expeditions to Shambhala were in full swing. Barchenko remembers: "With the help of Bokii I was able to win approval for an expedition to Afghanistan. The expedition was also due to travel to India, Sintszian and Tibet, and Bokii managed to receive around 100,000 roubles in funding (USD 600,000; O. Sh.)."²⁹

The money was allocated by the All-Union Council for National Economy on the orders of Feliks Dzerzhinskii himself, who displayed great enthusiasm for the enterprise. The money came from the illegal foundation of the Special Section, as mentioned subsequently by Bokii. Later, he also said:

As I was myself working on the knowledge of absolute truth (the absolute understanding of good and evil) when I met Barchenko, I took an interest in his tales about the existence of the synthesis of absolute scientific knowledge. In the same year, in 1925, I tried to organize a trip to

²⁸ TsA FSB, transcript of the interrogation of A. Barchenko, 23 December 1937.

²⁹ TsA FSB, transcript of the interrogation of A. Barchenko, 10 June 1937.

Afghanistan for Barchenko so that he could establish contact with the keepers of this ancient science from there.³⁰

The political commissar on the expedition was supposed to be Iakov Bliumkin, a subversive agent and organizer of terrorist acts, notorious for the murder of the German envoy, Baron Mirbach, in 1918, and for the preparation of terrorist acts in British Palestine in 1923. The central base for the preparation of the expedition was a secret sanatorium for the families of OGPU leaders who formed part of the large household controlled by the Liubianka. It was here that some of the future travellers learned English and Urdu, attended indispensable lectures and received practical instructions. Every day, all participants in the march to Shambhala practiced their horse riding skills in the shady alleys of the old park.

All preparations were basically finished by the end of July 1925. Now came the most important moment—it was necessary to have the paperwork approved by several bureaucratic agencies. In order to prevent an unwanted reaction by Georgii Chicherin, the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Bokii instructed Barchenko to approach the latter through a recommendation from Vladimir Zabrezhnev, a former member of the Comintern section for international relations, who was an illegal OGPU activist, hypnotiser, member of the lodge "Grand Orient de France" and went by the title "maitre vénérable".³¹ The People's Commissar had once been a freemason himself, and Bokii knew how much authority the society had over him. Barchenko remembered: "To begin with, Chicherin's reaction to my plans was positive..."³²

In order to cement their success, Bokii, Barchenko and Evgenii Gopius, the head of the Special Section's laboratory, went to see Chicherin at his office. After a short conversation the People's Commissar authorised the planned expedition. Bokii reported to the head of the Soviet diplomatic service that the expedition members' documents had been submitted to the visa service of the Afghan embassy a while ago and that the date of departure had already been fixed. However, this expedition was not meant to happen. It fell victim to an intrigue within the OGPU, hatched by Dzerzhinskii's deputies against Bokii

30 Arkhiv UFSB po SPB i Lenoblasti. [Archive FSB Administration for St Petersburg and the Leningrad Region]. Protocol of the interrogation of Bokii from 17–18 May 1937.

31 TsA FSB, transcript of the interrogation of A. Barchenko, 23 December 1937. In the personal file of Zabrezhnev, held in the documents of the Society of Political Prisoners [Obshchestvo politkatorzhan], he personally confirms that he belongs to the French freemasons: GARF [State Archive of the Russian Federation], f. 533, op. 3, d. 1051, l. 34.

32 TsA FSB, transcript of the interrogation of A. Barchenko, 10 June 1937.

himself. Under their pressure, only a day after authorizing it, Chicherin, completely changed his view on the expedition. As a result of his protest, it was cancelled at the last moment. In his new resolution for the Politburo of 1 August Chicherin wrote:

There can be no talk of an expedition to Afghanistan. Not only will the Afghan authorities not allow our Chekists to look for any secret brotherhoods, but their very appearance could cause serious trouble and lead to a press campaign in England that would inevitably present this expedition in a totally different light. We will create trouble for ourselves without the slightest practical advantage because, naturally, our Chekists will not be allowed to search for any secret brotherhoods.”³³

However, despite this unfortunate result, Barchenko continued to work at the OGPU's secret laboratory, which was situated at the Energy Institute in Moscow. Apart from his research, Barchenko was working towards the foundation of the occult “United Workers’ Brotherhood” and involved Bokii in this task, for whom he became over time an indisputable guru. This is how Bokii, head of the Special Section, described Barchenko: “Barchenko called himself a disciple of the ancient society, claiming that he had been initiated into all of this by a secret envoy of that society’s religious and political centre, with whom he had managed to establish contact.”³⁴ Gleb Bokii’s subsequent description of the events, most likely given under torture, seems almost incredible, but here it is:

I remember the following two events: In 1925, I organized Barchenko’s trip to the Altai Mountains, where Barchenko was supposed to establish contact with the sects of “White Water” (*Belovod’e*³⁵), religio-mystical circles in Central Asia who are very close to our centre “Shambhala in their mystical teachings. As a result of Barchenko’s trip a number of persons from among the local sectarians were designated to undertake regular pilgrimages to this mystical centre abroad. In 1926–27, Barchenko visited Bakhchisarai in the Crimea, where he established contact with the members of the Muslim order “Sandi-Eddini-Dzhibabi”. Subsequently he invited the son of the sheikh (the head) of this order to Moscow and brought him to me. At approximately the same time he travelled to Ufa and Kazan, where he established contact with the der-vishes of the “Haksh-Bendi” and “Khalidi” orders. In addition, Barchenko

33 APRF [Archive of the President of the Russian Federation] f. 3, op. 65, d. 739, l. 57.

34 Arkhiv UFSB po SPB i Lenoblasti [Archive FSB Administration for St Petersburg and the Leningrad Region]. Protocol of the interrogation of Bokii, 17–18 May, 1937.

35 See Markus Osterrieder’s chapter in this volume.

undertook various trips to contact sects in Samara region and Kostroma. In 1926, Barchenko travelled to Kostroma in order to meet representatives of our “Shambhala” order, who were due to arrive from abroad.”³⁶

With the transfer of the Brotherhood’s activities to Moscow, and also because of Barchenko’s move to a new workplace, the structure of the Brotherhood’s Supreme Council changed. Its members were Gleb Bokii, the head of the Special Section of the OGPU, Ivan Moskvín, first candidate for, then member of the Bolshevik Party’s Central Committee, who worked in the apparatus of the Central Committee and was a member of the Commission for Soviet Control Mironov, an engineer and friend of Bokii’s from their time at the Mountain Institute, working at the People’s Commissariat for Agriculture, Kostrínkin, an engineer and also a friend of Bokii’s from the Institute, B. Stomoniakov, the deputy People’s Commissar for Foreign Affairs and Gopius. And the Brotherhood itself was now called the “United Workers’ Brotherhood” (*Edinoe Trudovoe Bratstvo*). In spring 1927, Bokii approved a scientific expedition. The director of this enterprise was, once again, Barchenko. All applications by those wishing to work with Barchenko were approved by Bokii and Gopius, the laboratory director. But their resolutions were a pure formality—in the eyes of the leaders of the Special Section, the indisputable authority was Barchenko.

The base of the expedition was Bakhchisarai. Barchenko and his co-workers were staying in 4 Aziz Street. Having collected the necessary information, they left for the cave towns of the Crimea to search for the remains of civilizations such as the one that had at some point flourished on the Kol’skii peninsula. The legendary Goths had lived in these mountains only two hundred years ago. They had disappeared and now—so Barchenko believed—only a few stone pillars and the labyrinths of the caves reminded of the ancient architects who had possibly been sheltered here from a great flood.

On 24 March, Vladimir Korolev, the Soviet Consul to Mongolia and also a member of the “United Workers’ Brotherhood”, arrived in Bakhchisarai. He was due to set off to work in the Soviet-Mongol border town of Altan-Bulak and at the same time take a trip to Urga. Barchenko handed Korolev drawings depicting sacred symbols, including the Rosicrucians’ Rosy Cross. These were distinctive passwords, meant to be shown to Khaian Khirve, the head of the State Armed Guard and to Nikolai Roerich, who may have been in Mongolia at the time. The signs were a token of belonging to the “United Workers’ Brotherhood”. And Korolev was entrusted with yet another secret mission: he had to

36 Ibid.

pass a confidential message to the Buriat scholar Tsybikov in Ulan-Ude. The letter contained several pieces of secret information that must not fall into the hands of outsiders, lest there be an inevitable scandal.

The information was sensational and concerned the highest Kremlin bureaucrats privy to the secret of Shambhala.³⁷ In 1928, Bokii had asked Barchenko to sketch a project for the Soviet government to call upon the occult and mystic organizations of the East.³⁸ This proposal had come from somewhere within the Central Committee. And although Bokii did not disclose exactly who issued the order, suspicion fell on Avel' Enukidze, the secretary of the Presidium of the Central Executive Committee and a special minister of the Kremlin. The appeal was intended to convene a conference of occult and mystical organizations in Moscow, around 1929. Many of these groups lived in the territory of the British Colonies; evidently the Kremlin thought that in the case a revolutionary movement emerged in these territories, the assistance of the mystic leaders would be indispensable.

Right up until the time of repression the members of the "United Workers' Brotherhood", headed by Barchenko, continued to meet and hold séances at which they summoned the spirits of the dead or tried to establish contact with the netherworld. The content of these responses from the world beyond were shocking—almost all of them pointed to the mystic years 1937–1938, and every one of them told of death.

In the 1930s Barchenko and his work were still a state secret. In 1935 he transferred from the laboratory of the Energy Institute to another institution created by Stalin and Gorky, which was just as mysterious—the All-Union Institute for Experimental Medicine. Here, many different and, as a rule, secret experiments were carried out. In the chart detailing the structure and staff of the Institute's scientific departments, Aleksandr Barchenko was listed as a "research associate first class" and simultaneously as a "research and technical associate" working under Doctor Grigorii Kaminskii, the head of the neuro-energetic laboratory.³⁹ The Institute executed highly important commissions by the Party, the government and the NKVD. The infamous Doctor Grigorii Maironovskii, who carried out experiments with poisons and narcotics on political prisoners who had been sentenced to death, was listed at the same agency, but on a different page.⁴⁰

37 NARB [National Archive of the Republic Buriatiia], f. 1 (p), op. 1, d. 966, l. 20.

38 TsA FSB, transcript of the interrogation of A.V. Barchenko, 23 December 1937.

39 GARF, f. r-6742, op. 1, d. 56, l. 2.

40 *Ibid.*, l. 11 (ob.).

But on 16 May 1937 a fatal event took place. On this day, Bokii, the director of the consolidated department of the fourth administration of the NKVD (which until 1934 had been the OGPU Special Section), was summoned by Nikolai Ezhov, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs. Ezhov demanded from Bokii compromising material on several members of the Central Committee and high-ranking communists. It was no accident that he addressed this request to Bokii.

As a result of reforms within the OGPU-NKVD, the Special Section was gradually losing its previous resources and even entire departments. Bokii, the USSR's main informer and secret agent, was losing more and more of his powers and turning into the ordinary director of a cryptographic department that was fulfilling essentially technical functions. Sooner or later he would cede the remaining levers of his former power and simply be a powerless veteran of the communist party. And now the day had come when the head of the NKVD, Ezhov, asked Bokii to hand over all the compromising materials he had accumulated. At the very beginning of the conversation Ezhov, anticipating Bokii's reaction, warned: "This is an order by Comrade Stalin." At this point Bokii exploded and replied: "I don't care about Stalin, Lenin himself has assigned me to this position!" These words put an end to both his career and his life. The "black book"—the black dossier on Bokii was to become the reason for the liquidation of all those who knew of its existence.

For a long time, the materials relating to Barchenko's research were kept in Bokii's office. However, shortly before the arrest of the members of the Special Section in the spring of 1937, Bokii's deputy, Evgenii Gopius, had taken the boxes with the files from Barchenko's laboratory home with him. But Gopius, too, was arrested soon after, and when his flat was searched, the documents vanished into the abyss of the NKVD.

Almost all members of the secret society, "United Workers' Brotherhood", were captured and shot. Bokii was the first to perish. He was to receive a bullet in the back of the head on 15 November 1937. Twelve days later the former Central Committee member Ivan Moskvina fell from grace. After that it would have been Barchenko's turn. However, unlike the others, he spent a whole year in prison, which gave him the opportunity to write a petition to Ezhov, in which he explained the essence of his discoveries.

To Nikolai Ivanovich Ezhov, People's Commissar for Internal Affairs.

Confidential.

Prisoner of Lefortovo prison. Cell No. 76.

Aleksandr Vasil'evich Barchenko

24 December 1937

I have been told that the investigation of my case is over. I have disarmed completely and, leaving myself no loophole for digression, told the investigators all the details, events and names from my past that I could remember. I am aware that I am responsible for my past. I do not consider myself competent to look for attenuating circumstances in my past, even if there are any.

May I draw your attention to what follows below: in my time I was able to discover a physical phenomenon that is not described by contemporary science. Since the revolution I have devoted the majority of my life interests and time to the elaboration of this discovery.

At the time of my arrest I had almost finished setting up a laboratory at the All-Union Institute of Experimental Medicine for expanding the practical verification of my scientific constructions, which have already successfully been tested in an experiment in my former laboratory at the Energy Institute in 1935 and in domestic experiments. From the materials that were confiscated during my arrest it is known that I was forced to destroy part of the scientific materials, including the sketches that illustrate the practical application of my discovery, about two years prior to my arrest.

It is also known that before my arrest I had recourse to the assistance of certain people, including Professor Timiriazev, in order to promptly involve well-known specialists in the evaluation of the practical applicability of the concrete results of my scientific work, which were illustrated in the very materials that were destroyed. This process was interrupted by my arrest. Thus, I and the most reliable persons among my co-workers are at the moment deprived of the opportunity to completely explain the genuine social value of my discovery and the concrete perspectives for applying it for defence purposes. May I draw your attention to the fact that at the time of my arrest, the following propositions among those illustrated by the abovementioned discovery had been fully explored theoretically, and to a significant degree experimentally, so that they could be immediately verified in collective experiments:

1) As a result of studying the energetic factors of the structure of live matter, I discovered the means by which protozoa, including bacteria, regulate the energy of their vital functions. The further elaboration of these means can provide contemporary science with a very powerful

tool for the therapy, prophylaxis and disinfection of a number of diseases, including epidemics, as well as for defence against biological warfare.

2) As a result of studying the energetic factors of the structures of the vital functions of matter, I discovered the energy regulation of hyperplasia (cell growth), which has not been considered by contemporary science in the fight against malignant tumours. As a result of the parallel study of the factors of heightened resistance (mechanical) of live matter I discovered a concrete mathematic projective-geometrical (mechanism), which enables us to select the most advantageous architectural and building constructions, including those that allow us to finally build earthquake proof buildings.

3) This is not because of mystical miracles, but because the vibrational-vortical (a quantum wave process) and unrecorded features that my discovery revealed are the universal root of absolutely every instance of energy modification. The practical application of this discovery is in principle universal. I have studied, to a significant level, the mechanism of dialectical degrees of outwardly differentiate practical applications of the discovery to various areas of science and technology not just in theory, but also in practice.⁴¹

Aleksandr Barchenko was shot on 25 April 1938 and buried in the Sovkhoz *Kommunarka*, a special purpose object. However, we must also mention that one of the members of the “United Workers’ Brotherhood”, Shishelov, managed to avoid the NKVD clampdown. He fled from Moscow to the town of Borovichi in the Novgorod region, where he lived until the 1970s. In the 1950s he began a correspondence with Barchenko’s widow. The letters, which reveal many details of Barchenko’s scientific and spiritual search, as well as the reason behind the “United Workers’ Brotherhood”, are in his family’s archive.

On the basis of this information Barchenko’s son Sviatozar requested his father’s scientific papers from the KGB archive, but his request was rejected. However, by unofficial channels the leadership of the KGB informed him, through Fedor Nikolaevich Petrov,⁴² a former superior and friend of Barchenko, that these papers are still significant.⁴³

41 TsA FSB. File of A. Barchenko.

42 Fedor Nikolaevich Petrov (1876–1997), Soviet scientist and Party activist, twice awarded the title *Hero of Soviet Labor* (1961, 1971), professor. Graduated from Kiev University, Faculty of Medicine (1902). Active in the revolutionary movement since 1894. Head of Glavnauka (state agency coordinating scientific research, translator) from 1923–1927. From 1929–1933 chairman of the All-Union Society for Cultural Links Abroad (VOKS). Deputy editor-in-chief of

It is possible that these were the papers that Leonid Vasil'ev, the above-mentioned professor, had in mind when he talked to the American researchers Sheila Ostrander and Lynn Schroeder, the authors of the book *Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain*. Iurii Aleksandrovich Voronov, an Academician in medical science, told me how once, in the late 1950s, Leonid Vasil'ev, at the time a professor at the Bekhterev Institute, had convened his closest allies, who included Voronov, and told them about a conversation he had had at his home in Moscow with Marshal Rodion Malinovskii, the Soviet Union's Minister of Defence. The Minister had suggested financing a programme of research into telepathy and parapsychology, earmarking one billion roubles from his ministry's budget for that purpose. The sum in itself was so impressive that the scientist was taken aback and decided to consult with his co-workers, having promised to think it over. Barchenko's work remains enigmatic to the present day.

the first edition of the Great Soviet Encyclopaedia (1927–1941), from 1959–1973 member of the editorial board for science at the “Bol'shaia sovetskaia entsiklopediia” publishing house, editor-in-chief and member of the editorial board for many encyclopaedias and dictionaries.

43 Barchenko's son, Sviatozar Aleksandrovich Barchenko, told me about this conversation.