After the fall of the Romanov Family in 1917, Russia was thrown into a period of paranoia. The new communist government sought to weed out those still loyal to the Tsar, particularly those involved in monarchist activities, and those who were members of the White Army. The government's fear of monarchists and other enemies of the state did not stay within the confines of Russian borders as émigrés from Russia had fled and settled all over the world, they were just as much of a risk as those still in Russia, perhaps more so as they were free to meet and plan without having to worry about repercussions from the Russian government. To combat the threat of a tsarist takeover and a return of the monarchy, Checka, under Felix Dzerzhinsky, developed a false-flag operation to lure both tsarist supporters and non-Russian foreign supporters into Russia to be dealt with. Code named Trust, the operation would span nearly a decade, fool almost everyone involve, and lead to the death or imprisonment of many people, including the British spy Sidney Reilly. This paper will examine various sources to outline the main objectives of the Trust and if those objectives were met. It will begin by outlining a previous operation by Reilly to overthrow the Bolshevik government that lead to them implementing Trust. From there the paper will outline the beginnings of Trust and how those involved were able to convince both émigrés and foreign government officials (and non-officials) that it was a legitimate organisation. Because the story of Trust is full of intricacies, this essay will confine its scope to three main areas: the creation of Trust, the literary operation involving Vasily Shulgin, and the alleged capture and execution of Sidney Reilly.

Despite TRUST not being implemented until 1921, we must look earlier to understand why it was implemented. Towards the end of First World War and the murder of the Romanovs, Russia was governed by Bolsheviks who were "raised in secrecy and maturing under decades of conspiracy in their long-running struggle with the Czar's secret police". The secrecy surrounding the Bolshevik movement was transplanted onto those who may be against them when they obtained power. Lenin stated, "What we are facing is a systematic, methodical and evidently long-planned military and financial counter-revolutionary campaign against the Soviet Republic".² Though it seems like paranoia, the Bolsheviks were correct in their thinking; there were plots to oust them from power. In both January and August of 1918 Lenin survived two assassination attempts. Though it was Russian socialist revolutionaries from the inside who made these attempts on Lenin's life, the Bolshevik's distrust of the West and émigrés were not unfounded. Prior to the attempts on his life, Lenin established a new security organisation, Cheka, under the leadership of Felix Dzerzhinsky³ tasked with defending "the revolution and conquer the enemy even if its sword does by chance sometimes fall on the heads of the innocent". 4 Their goal was to weed out monarchist supporters and anti-Bolsheviks, and eliminate them.⁵

One such outside plot was the Lockhart Plot supposedly masterminded by Robert Bruce Lockhart, then a British agent masquerading as a diplomat in Moscow, and Sidney

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¹ Hughes-Wilson, John. *The Puppet Masters: Spies, Traitors and the Real Forces Behind World Events*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2004. p. 284

² Andrew, Christopher M., and Vasili Mitrokhin. *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, New York: Basic Books. 1999. p. 25

³ Stove, R.J. " The Cheka, G.P.U and O.G.P.U: Bolshevism's Early Secret Police." *National Observer* no. 49 (2001), p. 17

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⁵ Brook-Shepherd, Gordon. "Balance Sheets." In *Iron Maze: The Western Secret Services and the Bolsheviks*, 315-329. London: Macmillan, 1998. P. 316

Reilly. The alleged plot involved a disruption to food supplies that would cause civil unrest within the Russian population. The unrest would allow for the assassination of Bolshevik leaders starting with Lenin, and the supposed counter-revolution set up by Reilly consisting of 60 000 White Russian officers.8 It is unknown if the Lockhart Plot actually existed as both Britain and Russia have differing views on the actual events. 9 It should also be noted that, according to a BBC article written in 2011, that Britain has not yet declassified documents confirming the plot existed or that the documents themselves exist. 10 Lockhart himself denies playing any part in a conspiracy to overthrow the Bolshevik government, instead placing all of the responsibility upon Sidney Reilly. 11 Again, Lockhart's original denial of his participation was questioned by his son in a letter to P.H.R. Wright of the Foreign Office in 1967 in which he said "my father himself has made it clear to me that he worked much more closely with Reilly than he had publicly indicated". 12 Regardless of if the plot was a reality, or, as Drebo suggests, that it was Dzerzhinsky who had been the mastermind behind the plot, not the British¹³, it would be the precursor to one of the most successful false-flag operations in history.

According to Natalie Grant the function and strategies of TRUST were two-fold: 1) monitor anti-Bolshevik activities occurring outside of Russia, and 2) provide avenues for

⁶ Long, John. "Searching for Sidney Reilly: The Lockhart Plot in Revolutionary Russia, 1918." *Europe-Asia Studies* 47, no. 7 (1995), p. 1226.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Knightley, Philip. "Crush The Red Terror." In *The Second Oldest Profession: Spies and Spying in the Twentieth Century*. London: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 2003, p. 71

⁹ Drebo, R. K. "Lockhart Plot or Dzerhinskii Plot?" *The Journal of Modern History* 43, no. 3 (1971), p. 416

¹⁰ Thomson, Mike. "Did Britain try to assassinate Lenin?" BBC World News. Last modified March 19, 2011. Accessed February 1, 2013. http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-12785695.

¹¹ Drebo, "Lockhart Plot", p. 416

¹² Robin Lockhart to PRH Wright, Foreign Office, 9th February, 1967, Robert H.B. Lockhart Collection, Box 11 Folder: Reilly, Russian Revolution, etc.

¹³ Drebo, "Lockhart Plot", p. 420

"shrewdly contrived disinformation".¹⁴ This shrewdly contrived disinformation was prepared by a special bureau calld "*Razvedupr*", who included just enough authentic information to make it believable.¹⁵ The plan of the Bolshevik government was to gain legitimacy and recognition from Western governments, and to quell any sort of military retaliation by giving the impression that changes within Russia were happening, and they would return to being a "respectable member of the community of nations".¹⁶

By 1921, Lenin had implemented the New Economic Policy (NEP) that allowed for limited free trade and for certain Soviet representatives to travel freely throughout the West to establish economic contacts. ¹⁷ In reality, the NEP was "just a ploy in the Bolshevik power game" ¹⁸ as by 1926, Stalin was firmly in power and Russia was no longer vulnerable to the White Army or monarchist supporters. ¹⁹ One NEP representative was Aleksandr Yakushev who travelled to Estonia in 1921 on the premise of establishing NEP ties with Western sources. Whilst in Estonia, Yakushev made contact with a man by the name of Yuri Artamanov, a monarchist supporter who had fled Russia under the Bolshevik regime. Yakushev's reason for the visit was to drum up support for the monarchist supporters in Russia, who he said, were alive and well and lying in wait for their chance to act. ²⁰ Artmanov bought Yakushev's story but what he did not know was that Yakushev was working, most likely against his wishes, for CHEKA after having been imprisoned, tortured, and brainwashed into believing in the Bolshevik cause. ²¹ Yakushev's real goal, under the watchful eye of Cheka, was to start the

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¹⁴ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence 1 (1986), p. 56

¹⁵ Simpkins, Patricia. "The Trust." *The Security and Intelligence Foundation* (1989), p. 6

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale.", p. 53

¹⁸ Brook-Shepherd, Gordon. "Balance Sheets." p. 316

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Volkman, Ernest. "The Master Spy's Last Case: The Trust Operation." In Espionage: The Greatest Spy Operations of the Twentieth Century. Toronto, ON: John Wiley & Sons, 1995. p. 8
Ibid, p. 9

operation by planting pieces of information with those he knew would contact others loyal to the old regime. Artamanov, dazzled by the thought of a monarchist coup, immediately made contact with other émigrés around Europe. Unfortunately for Artamanov, the courier hired to deliver his letters was a Cheka agent.²²

Perhaps the most famous figure surrounding the Trust was British spy Sidney Reilly. Born into an aristocratic family in what is now the Ukraine, he immigrated to England in the early twentieth century. Much of Reilly's life is surrounded in mystery or classified documents, and even his real name seems to be a point of contention amongst scholars and writers.²³ Regardless of his origins, Reilly appears in England in 1898 when he appears on a marriage register, and then again in 1899 when he joins the secret service.²⁴ What little is known about Reilly and his activities comes from his own twisting of the facts in correspondence and second-hand accounts, as well as accounts from his peers, and his last wife.²⁵ Whether or not Reilly actually worked for Lockhart in Russia is also a point of contention, with Lockhart changing his story at least twice, and the British government's official position is that Reilly did supply information, but there is no evidence to support that he worked directly for Lockhart.²⁶ What is generally accepted is that Reilly was anti-Bolshevik, he tried to organise a coup against the Bolshevik government, and that sometime in late 1925 he made his way from Finland across the border into Russia where he was arrested.²⁷ What is unknown is why Reilly was such an important catch to the Soviet government. Knightley suggests that he "fell

²² Ibid p. 4

²³ Natalie Grant states Reilly's birth name to be Sigmund Rosenblum whereas Andrew Cook states it to be Shlomo or Solomon. Even Reilly's parents are shrouded in doubt with some accounts saying they were Gregory and Pauline Rosenblum and others saying Reilly was the product of an affair between Pauline and an unknown man, quite possibly a relative of Pauline's. Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 53, Cook, Andrew "Ace of Spies", p. 27

²⁴ Ainsworth, John. "Sidney Reilly's Reports from South Russia, December 1918-March 1919." Europe-Asia Studies 50, no. 8 (1998), p.

 ²⁵ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 62
²⁶ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 62

²⁷ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 64

victim to the long arm and the long memory of the Cheka" 28 and there is speculation by some that he was a double agent for the Soviets all along, though this is generally not taken as fact. 29

What is odd is that according to Natalie Grant, Reilly, though he had contact with émigré groups, was not even aware of the Trust until 1925.³⁰ After receiving a letter from a former colleague, Reilly made his way to Finland where he met with Russian agent Mariya Zakharchenko-Shultz and Nikolai Bunakov.³¹ The plan was to get Reilly close to the border with Russia where he would be met by Yakushev and then enticed to cross into Russia.³² He was taken to Moscow under the pretense of meeting with Trust members, but instead was arrested and imprisoned in Lubyanka prison.³³ What happened to Reilly after that is a matter of speculation. On the 28th of September, the day Reilly was meant to return, the Russians staged a show involving volleys of gunfire at the border with Finland. At the outcome, the Soviets started the rumour that Reilly had been shot trying to cross the border.³⁴ According to an interview with Boris Gudz, an OGPU officer, Reilly was imprisoned and interrogated in Lubyanka prison, and whilst he may have undergone psychological torture, Gudz maintains that there was no physical torture performed upon him.³⁵ Gudz states that OGPU officers killed Reilly on the night of the 5th of November 1925 in the woods outside of Moscow as Reilly was being taken for nightly exercise.

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²⁸ Knightley, Philip. "Crush The Red Terror." p. 72

²⁹ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 62

³⁰ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 63

³¹ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 64

³² Cook, Andrew. Ace of Spies: The True Story of Sidney Reilly. Stroud: Tempus, 2004. p. 238

³³ Cook, Andrew. *Ace of Spies*. p. 242

³⁴ Cook, Andrew. Ace of Spies, p.242.

³⁵ Cook, Andrew. "To trap a spy | World news | The Guardian." The Guardian. Last modified October 7, 2002. Accessed January 31, 2013. http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/oct/07/russia.artsandhumanities.

Jeffrey Richelson posits that Reilly was seen as "their [the Russian government's] main nemesis", 36 and that the Bolsheviks "saw his peculiar schemes to overthrow their regime as an indication, not that he was living in a fantasy world, but that there was a sophisticated SIS conspiracy approved at the highest level within Whitehall".³⁷ It seems odd that for an intelligence service capable of planning, implementing, and maintaining an operation on the scale of the Trust, that they could not, or perhaps would not, see through Reilly's grandiose claims. However, the response of the Cheka and the Russian government to Reilly could be due to their paranoia or because they had no reliable source within the British intelligence community.³⁸

Unlike the plot surrounding Reilly, the use of Vasily Shulgin by the Trust appears to be that of a political nature. Shulgin was an anti-Bolshevik journalist and writer, and he was unwittingly used by Trust to spread propaganda and to assist in legitimizing the Soviet government. Yakushev who he met at a meeting in Berlin in 1923 introduced Shulgin to the Trust.³⁹ In 1925 Shulgin made his way to Russia to examine the Soviet situation for himself. What Shulgin saw was a carefully planned by his escorts who he thought were political dissidents but who were really Trust operatives.⁴⁰ His travels through the fledgling Soviet Russia were published in a book called *Tri Stolitsy* and served to justify Soviet activities against their own population as well as outsiders.⁴¹ What makes the case of Shulgin strange is how would an outspoken anti-Bolshevik émigré be taken in by the fake underground monarchist organisation. Shulgin's writing

³⁶ Richelson, Jeffrey T. A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century. Oxford: Oxford University Press - Kindle ed., 1995. p. 61

³⁷ Richelson, Jeffrey T. A Century of Spies p. 61

³⁸ Knightley, Philip. "Crush The Red Terror." P. 76

³⁹ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale.", p. 62 ⁴⁰ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale.", p. 57

⁴¹ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 67

would ultimately assist the Trust in transforming public opinion that Russia was "safe for monarchists again".⁴²

The success of Trust rests not only on the elaborate and deceptive practices of the Bolshevik government but also on the gullibility of those whom they deceived.⁴³ Reilly's disdain for the new Russian government should have, according to Knightly, disqualified him from being a representative of SIS in Russia as it "clouded his vision"44 It is impossible to determine the outcome of the Trust operation and the strength of the Soviets had Reilly not held such strong anti-Bolshevik views. The repercussions of the operation being blown open could have had detrimental effects on major historical events. Reilly was not the only one who viewed Trust and the Bolsheviks with suspicion. Admiral Hall, a British MP, stated in 1918 "a foe that is hydra-headed and whose evil power will spread over the whole world. That foe is Soviet Russia". 45 Likewise, Polish intelligence officer Wladyslaw Michniewicz also doubted the validity of MOTsR with his suspicions being confirmed after a trip to Russia early in the Trust years. Whilst there he was struck by the vagueness of information and concluded that "Trust was an elaborate deception".46 Unfortunately his findings were dismissed with his superiors too blinded by the valuable intelligence they were receiving from the Trust.⁴⁷ It wasn't until 1926 that Michniewicz's findings were reexamined by yet another suspicious party, Polish minister of war Marshal Pilsudski, and found to have merit.⁴⁸ At that point it was far too late as the Trust was winding down and largely unnecessary.

⁴² Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 67

⁴³ Ibid." p. 57

⁴⁴ Knightley, Philip. "Crush The Red Terror." p. 60

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Volkman, Ernest. "The Master Spy's Last Case", p. 13-14

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Ibid

If the historical documents are to be taken as fact, there is little doubt that Trust, and those involved, met their objectives. Grant has outlined various objectives tasked to Trust: want of recognition by the international community by the Bolsheviks, alleviating suspicions of Western governments, and the destruction of enemies. Though Reilly and Shulgin were not the only targets of the Trust, the contrast in how they were used show a methodical plan by Cheka to infiltrate and gain a presence in various social and political circles. By eliminating Reilly, Cheka was rid of a spy with a grudge, and by duping Shulgin into printing propaganda; they were able to gain legitimacy where they may not have otherwise. The entire Trust operation would bring Russian intelligence to the forefront of the security community as one to be feared and respected. They managed to dupe almost everyone and carry on for nearly a decade, all whilst meeting their known objectives.

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⁴⁹ Grant, Natalie. "Deception On A Grand Scale." p. 61

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