

Red Orchestra

Code name for a Russian spy network that infiltrated German intelligence during World War II. The Red Orchestra was established in 1937 on behalf of Soviet military intelligence by Leopold Trepper (Leib Domb), a Polish Jew.

The Germans occupied France in 1940; soon the Red Orchestra moved its headquarters to Paris and set up offices around Western Europe. The network managed to infiltrate main German offices in Paris, including the German air force and high command, and even tapped the phones at the French branch of German intelligence.

The Red Orchestra successfully found out about the imminent German invasion of the Soviet Union and passed on detailed information to Joseph Stalin who, for whatever reason, refused to acknowledge it. The network also gave advance warning of the German attacks on Moscow, Stalingrad, and the Caucasus. However, German counterintelligence began tailing the Red Orchestra in late 1941, and members were arrested in spring 1942. By November, the Paris headquarters were liquidated and Trepper arrested. He escaped less than a year later. After the war Trepper was flown to Moscow, where instead of receiving the hero's welcome he expected, he was framed and thrown into jail. He was released in 1955, and in 1973 immigrated to Israel.