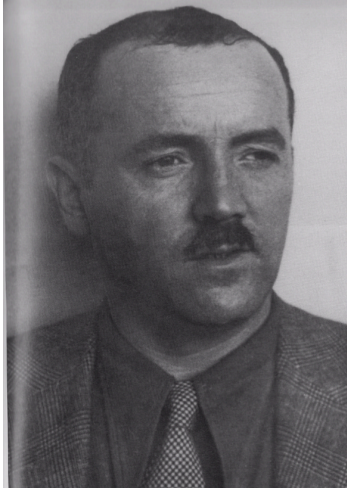


**Leiba Feldbin a.k.a. Alexander Orlov - a Boy from Babruysk**  
**Carola Murray-Seegert Ph.D.**



Leiba FELDBIN, the only son of Lazar FELDBIN and Hannah ZARETSKY, was born in 1895 in Babruysk, a busy town with a large military garrison and an important port on the broad Berezina River (in what is now Belarus). His father's family came from Pogost, a shtetl about 90 km upstream. The region was famous for its timber - tall, straight fir trees whose resilient wood made ideal masts for sailing ships. Lazar and his nine siblings were involved in aspects of the lumber trade up and down the Berezina valley: logging, floating lashed-together trunks to markets downriver, or operating sawmills. The family was close-knit; Leiba had cousins in Borisov, Minsk, Igumen, Byerazino, Pogost and Bogushevichi. One of Leiba's closest friends was his first

cousin Zinovy Borisovich KATSNELSON, whose kin ran passenger boats and ferries out of the Babruysk port.

Around 1914, Leiba, Zinovy and their parents moved to Moscow, where the young men studied Law at the city's elite University. Both were drafted into the Tsar's army during WWI and by the time of the Russian Revolution, the cousins were well placed to take advantage of the opportunities that opened up for well-educated Jews in the new Soviet system. Zinovy rose to the upper ranks of the OGPU Economic Department, but lost his life during the Stalinist purges of the late 1930s. Under the assumed name of Alexander ORLOV, Leiba would become famous as the highest-ranking Soviet Intelligence Officer to escape Stalin's regime when he brought his wife and daughter out of Europe in 1938.

Leiba and his family lived very quietly in the U.S., aided by his cousins - the descendants of his father's brothers and sisters who had left Russia and settled on the East Coast. Leiba emerged from hiding after Stalin's death in 1953, and it was only after "Alexander Orlov" published an expose of Stalin's crimes that the CIA and FBI learned (to their embarrassment) that a 3-Star NKVD officer had been living in the U.S. for the past 15 years. Leiba Feldbin died in 1973 and is buried with his wife and daughter in Mt. Auburn Cemetery in Cambridge MA, a place he once used as a message drop while spying for Russia.

Scholars still debate Leiba's possible role as the 'spy master' who controlled the Philby-Burgess-Maclean espionage ring in Britain in the 1930s; historians still speculate about

<http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/Moskva/>

his account of the secret behind Stalin's execution of hundreds of close officers and officials (see Sources below for more details). Leiba's present-day cousins wonder about the fate of family members who stayed behind in the Berezina valley and Moscow. Perhaps someone reading this story can supply a clue.

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