

Roman Malinovsky

Roman Vatslavovich Malinovsky was a prominent [Bolshevik](#) politician before the [Russian revolution](#), while at the same time working as the best-paid agent for the [Okhrana](#), the Tsarist secret police. They codenamed him 'Portnoi' (the tailor).



Politics

He joined the Bolsheviks. In January 1912, he travelled to Prague, where [Vladimir Lenin](#) had organised a conference to finalise the break with the Mensheviks and create a separate Bolshevik organisation. He made such a good impression on Lenin that he was elected to the Central Committee, and chosen to represent the Bolsheviks in the forthcoming elections to the [Fourth Duma](#), to which he was elected as its most prominent working-class deputy, in November 1912. He was simultaneously the Okhrana's best-paid agent, earning 8,000 rubles a year, 1,000 more than the Director of the Imperial Police. He led the six-member Bolshevik group (two of whom were Okhrana agents) and was deputy chairman of the Social Democrats in the Duma. As a secret agent, he helped send several important Bolsheviks (like [Sergo Ordzhonikidze](#), [Joseph Stalin](#), and [Yakov Sverdlov](#)) into Siberian exile.

When [Menshevik](#) leader [Julius Martov](#) first denounced Malinovsky as a spy in January 1913, Lenin refused to believe him and stood by Malinovsky.

Malinovsky's efforts helped the Okhrana arrest [Sergo Ordzhonikidze](#) (14 April 1912), [Yakov Sverdlov](#) (10 February 1913) and Stalin (23 February 1913). The latter was arrested at a Bolshevik fundraising ball, which Malinovsky had persuaded him to attend by lending him a suit and silk cravat. Malinovsky was talking to Stalin when detectives took him and even shouting he would free him.

In July 1913, he betrayed a plan for Sverdlov and Stalin to escape, warning the police chief in [Turukhansk](#). He was then the only Bolshevik leader not in foreign or Siberian exile. Soon after this foiled escape plan, Stalin came over to Martov's view and strongly suspected Malinovsky to be an Okhrana spy, which was confirmed correct years later, fuelling Stalin's future distrust of his comrades.

Resignation, exile and death

On 8 May 1914, he was forced to resign from the Duma after Russia's recently promoted Deputy Minister for the Interior, General [Vladimir Dzhunkovskiy](#), decided that having a police agent in such a prominent position might cause a scandal.

When World War I broke out, he was interned in a POW camp by the Germans. Lenin, still standing by him, sent him clothes. He said: "If he is a provocateur, the police gained less from it than our Party did." This refers to his strong anti-Menshevism. Eventually, Lenin changed his mind: "What a swine: shooting's too good for him!"

In 1918, he tried to join the [Petrograd Soviet](#), but [Grigory Zinoviev](#) recognized him. In November, after a brief trial, Malinovsky was executed by a firing squad.

According to the British historian [Simon Sebag Montefiore](#), his successful infiltration into the Bolsheviks helped fuel the paranoia of the Soviets (and, more specifically, Stalin) that eventually gave way to the [Great Terror](#).

According to the transcribed recollections of Nikolay Vladimirovich Veselago, a former Okhrana officer, both Malinovsky and Stalin reported on Lenin as well as on each other although Stalin was unaware that Malinovsky was also a penetration agent.