

A 69-YEAR-OLD Polish Jew has been waiting for 38 years, in a sense, for Israel to thank him. Victor Grayevski, a chain-smoking retiree, is himself an Israeli. But the favor that he did for the Jewish state and inadvertently for the United States has remained one of the last secrets of the Cold War. Until now.

As difficult as it may be to understand in this post-Cold War world, in 1956 a few thousand words uttered by a Soviet leader were the Holy Grail for Western intelligence agencies. Nikita Khrushchev, general secretary of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R., had made a speech in February of that year, shortly after taking charge in the upheavals that followed Joseph Stalin's death.

The Khrushchev speech was the first official account of Stalin's crimes against his own people, doubtless providing clues to Russia's economic and military strength, and the West was desperate to obtain it. Then-CIA director Allen Dulles would later describe acquiring the speech as the outstanding achievement of his career. But he never revealed that Israel had scored the triumph. The Israelis, in turn, never told the Americans how they got the document.

Espionage coups are often built on sheer luck. So it was when Grayevski, a Polish journalist, flew to Israel in December 1955. In fact, he was the first Pole given permission by his government to visit Israel as a tourist—to visit his ailing father, who in 1947 had moved to Palestine with his wife and a daughter. The month that Victor Grayevski spent there transformed him into a Zionist too.

Grayevski had been born in Cracow in 1925 into a family of non-observant Jews who fled to the East when the Nazis seized Poland. For the duration of World War II, the Grayevskis lived in the largely Muslim central Soviet republic of Kazakhstan.

Although his parents and sister left for Israel after the war, Victor felt that he could do just fine in the newly Communist Poland. He joined the party, studied journalism in Warsaw and was assigned to PAP, the official Polish news agency.

Within a few years, he was promoted to the post of editor in charge of news from the Soviet Union and its East European satellite states, a senior position that opened many doors in Warsaw. Grayevski was invited to receptions at the Soviet Embassy, and unlike most Poles he rubbed shoulders with Westerners as well as diplomats from the East at cocktail parties and other venues frequented by foreigners. When his father fell ill, he found that he was such a trusted servant of the state that his visa request was granted.

"I liked Israel from the first minute," Grayevski recalls.

He could have defected then and there, simply throwing away his return ticket to Warsaw. But he felt loyal to Communist Poland and decided to work within the system rather than defy it.

Grayevski returned to Warsaw in January 1956, wrote a series of articles about Israel and also applied for an exit visa to move there.

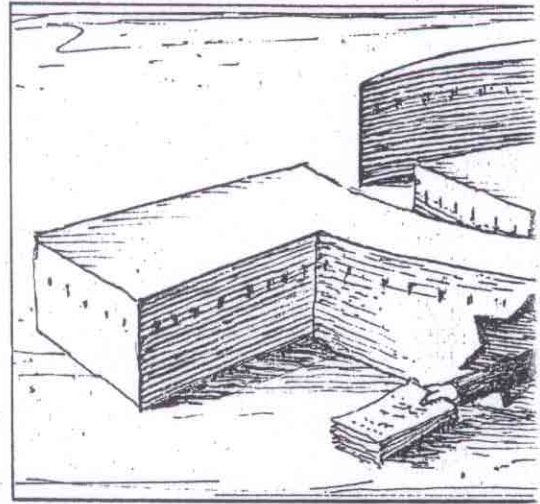
About the same time, Moscow was busy with preparations for the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. The centerpiece for the Congress turned out to be Khrushchev's speech, but the foreign delegates—to their chagrin, but who would dare complain?—were ordered to leave the auditorium before the Soviet leader rose to speak.

The fiery, detailed report on Stalin's horrors would have been strong stuff for visiting party leaders for whom Stalin

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**The Leak of**  
*How the West Got Khrushchev*



had been almost a god. All across Eastern Europe, they had tried to model their regimes on his. Yet, a few days after the congress, Khrushchev decided to send the text of his speech—only seven copies—to the leaders of the East European satellite countries. Military couriers brought the document, in its original Russian, to the rulers of Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Romania.

Each copy, consisting of 58 pages carrying two columns of Cyrillic print, was held in a red binder with the Russian words for "Top Secret" stamped on the cover. Enclosed were strict instructions on keeping the speech's contents to a very limited circle. Each party leader himself should allow only a small group of deputies to read it—without making any copies.

Western espionage agencies, meantime, had launched their search for the speech. Under orders from President Eisenhower, Dulles appropriated around \$1 million for procurement of the Khrushchev text. But the West's secret agents in all the European capitals were stymied.

In Warsaw, when Polish Communist Party chief Eduard Ochab read the speech, he was shocked. Khrushchev's sharp criticism of Stalin was close to heresy. Upset and excited, Ochab felt the need to share his feelings with his aides. A few were invited to read the text, and then the word flashed down Warsaw's political corridors that there was something big—and important—that had to be read.

Ochab gave in to the pressure of his top aides and had a few copies made. Before long, some of the more sensational quotes were being repeated around the huge buildings of the Communist Party.

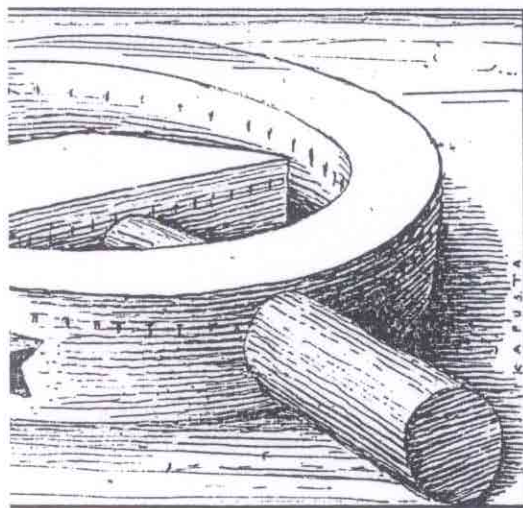
Victor Grayevski heard about the speech too, but not from his usual sources. Divorced from his first wife, he had a girlfriend with a senior job in the massive bureaucracy of the party secretariat. Grayevski persuaded her to borrow the text, in its original Russian, from her office.

Grayevski knew he could sell the information to the Americans or other Western diplomats with whom he had sipped cocktails, but the effect of his trip through Israel was such that the intelligence coup of the decade came to Israel

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# the Century

## 's Secret Denunciation of Stalin



BY JANUSZ KAPUSTA FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

for free. Acting out of new-found Zionist zeal, he decided to give the document to Israel as a gift.

First Grayevski had to work out some logistical problems. He decided to photograph the Khrushchev text but in the pre-Xerox age this would require the kind of small, light-weight camera that no private citizen—especially in Poland—could have.

Grayevski turned to a trusted friend, who was often in touch with Israeli diplomats in Warsaw. The friend, whom Grayevski still refuses to name, photographed the 58 pages, gave the film to the Israelis and handed the document back to Grayevski for return to the party offices.

An Israeli intelligence officer, based in Warsaw under diplomatic cover, hurriedly flew to Vienna. Only then did he contact headquarters in Israel to report what he had in his hands.

Within days in that April, the speech reached the desk of Amos Manor, the director of the General Security Services—the domestic intelligence agency known by its Hebrew initials Shin Bet. The mere fact that the text got to Manor, at his office in Jaffa, the port town alongside Tel Aviv, was a bureaucratic oddity. Why did a valuable piece of foreign intelligence come to the agency assigned primarily to counter-espionage at home? Isn't foreign espionage the job of the other major secret agency—the Mossad?

In fact, Manor had laid the groundwork himself, by placing his own operatives alongside the Mossad's in Israel's embassies abroad. An Auschwitz survivor, Manor—born in Austro-Hungary in 1918—had worked underground in post-war Eastern Europe, helping thousands of Jews move to Israel after the Holocaust. He joined Shin Bet and quickly rose through the ranks to become Israel's counterintelligence chief.

One of his biggest challenges was persuading the United States that Israel was a valuable part of the free world and not riddled with Soviet spies. Now, in April 1956, the practice of stationing Shin Bet people in the Communist bloc—to screen Jewish immigrants before they set off for Israel—yielded an unexpected, huge dividend: the Khrushchev text.

Manor, who did not know Russian, asked a senior aide to translate the Khrushchev speech into Hebrew. Manor also

had Shin Bet's top experts on the Soviet bloc read the text to judge its authenticity. "The Soviet KGB," he explains, "was already known to be adept at fabricating documents for disinformation purposes. I wanted to make sure I had the real thing."

On a Friday afternoon in early April, Manor set off for north Tel Aviv to see David Ben-Gurion at his home. The most important part of the package, for Israel's first prime minister, was the original text in Russian—a language he knew.

Having heard that the Americans were hungry for the document, Ben-Gurion decided that Israel could get the best mileage by handing it to the United States. He saw an opportunity to strengthen an intelligence cooperation agreement he had reached with Washington five years earlier, knowing that many U.S. officials were doubtful that a tiny socialist country filled with suspicious newcomers could be of any use.

The FBI had even singled out Amos Manor as a possible Communist mole. Manor recalls that J. Edgar Hoover's agency tried to block his entry to America in 1952, when he was invited as a guest of the CIA.

The Israelis pointed out that by debriefing the new arrivals from Eastern Europe, they were able to learn a huge amount about the inner workings of the Communist system. Now Ben-Gurion had reason to hope that the Khrushchev speech could further cement relations with the United States.

The document, exactly as photographed in Warsaw, was carried by an Israeli courier to Washington, where the Eisenhower administration was astonished by Israel's capability, speed and discretion—"a first-class feat," says Ray Cline, former deputy director of the CIA.

Allen Dulles discussed the document at length with his brother, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. On their recommendation, Eisenhower decided that the Khrushchev text be published—hoping to cause the Soviets the maximum embarrassment. It was leaked to some American newspapers and wire services, and all 20,000 words were broadcast over Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty.

The procurement of the text was, for more than 20 years, considered an American accomplishment. But in the 1980s it began to emerge that this was Israel's success, although early versions credited the Mossad rather than Amos Manor and his Shin Bet agency.

A guessing game among spooks and espionage writers then began, aimed at identifying Israel's source. But based on his own confirmation and that of Manor, Grayevski's role can now be stated with certainty.

Despite his contribution to Israeli intelligence, Grayevski was not shown any special treatment. In January 1957, he moved to Israel, one of 30,000 Jews who took part in the "Gomulka Immigration": Polish Jews who were forced out of their senior jobs by the Communist leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka. His absorption into Israeli society was the same as everyone else's.

Like any other new immigrant, he went through the intensive Hebrew courses known as the *ulpan* and was later employed by Israel's foreign ministry as a translator. In the 1960s, Grayevski became a broadcaster in the Polish-language service of Israeli state radio, and in 1970 he became the head of the entire department, beaming Israel's foreign language broadcasts into Eastern Europe.

Now retired, Grayevski recalls that when he got to the port of Haifa, only his family was waiting for him. In the years that followed he never met Amos Manor.

"It just happened," says the former Shin Bet chief apologetically, "that we never talked to each other."

"It does look a little strange to me that they never said thanks," says Grayevski, "but I've never complained."