

AN AGENT
on the
OTHER
SIDE



George O'Toole

A DELL BOOK

For Mary Ann

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CONTENTS

PROLOGUE	7
PART I	
The Other Side	9
PART II	
The Mission	87
PART III	
Invasion	149
PART IV	
The Siegler Network	221
EPILOGUE	247
AUTHOR'S NOTE	250

PROLOGUE

Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovsky was a colonel in Soviet Military Intelligence. He was a close friend of Marshal Varentsov and a confidant of General Serov. His father-in-law, General Gapanovich, had been well connected in the Communist Party. By the age of forty-one, Penkovsky had climbed to the upper strata of the Russian hierarchy and lived comfortably in Moscow with his wife and teen-age daughter.

In 1961 Penkovsky contacted Western Intelligence. During the next sixteen months he turned over thousands of pages of valuable political, military, and economic information to his British and American contacts. The strength of the U.S. position during the Cuban missile crisis of 1962 was a direct result of information about Soviet strategic capabilities that Penkovsky had passed to the West.

Penkovsky was arrested by the KGB in October 1962. On May 11, 1963, he was convicted of espionage and sentenced to death. According to official Soviet sources, the sentence was carried out five days later, on May 16. Other informants claimed that Penkovsky was not executed, but taken to a remote Russian village for further interrogation. These sources alleged that Penkovsky was held for two years and finally managed to take his own life.

In any case, Penkovsky was generally believed to be dead until, in the summer of 1968, evidence began to accumulate which suggested that he had, in some sense, survived.

AUTHOR'S NOTE

When a former employee of the Central Intelligence Agency writes an espionage novel, it may be read with the hope that it will provide a window into the true inner workings of that heavily veiled organization. This must be especially so when the story is told against the backdrop of actual events, such as those which occurred in August 1968, or when real people like Oleg Vladimirovich Penkovsky are involved. In these times when classified documents are published in the morning newspapers, it is not unreasonable for one who reads such a book to suspect that it may be a cautious revelation of thinly disguised historical fact.

On the other hand, many readers may find their credulity taxed by certain situations and events in this story and may reject them as totally incredible, even though they happen to be true. This will be very much the case for the reader who is unfamiliar with the work which has been done in psychic research during the last few years, both in the West and in Communist countries.

An Agent on the Other Side is a lie. Lying, however, like most human endeavors, can be done either poorly or well. Inspector Spinka gives us his two criteria for a good lie: it must contain many elements which are true, and it must include something so improbable that it seems it could not have been invented. In that sense, I have tried to make the story a good lie. To whatever extent I have succeeded, the reader may feel that I am now obliged to help him sort out the facts from the fiction. I shall try to do so.

With two exceptions, every reference in the story to Colonel Penkovsky is, to the best of my knowledge, true. The exceptions are: the code word he used to signal his contacts that he had deposited information in the dead drop and, of course, his posthumous senti-

ments. All of the factual information in this book concerning him is available in openly published books and articles.

The events described in this book which pertain to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 are either true, or close to the truth. The division of opinion as to whether or not the Russians would invade is, as far as I can determine, close to the actual debate which took place within intelligence circles at that time. The characters who voice those opinions in the book are, of course, fictitious. The encounters between the Soviet troops and the citizens of Czechoslovakia are based very closely on what actually happened. Anyone who was in Prague when the invasion took place will probably find the incidents described in that part of the book to be familiar.

The historical instances mentioned in this story, in which the occult has been employed in the service of espionage are, to the best of my knowledge, factual. To the reader who is interested in this subject and who seeks an exposition longer than that spoken by Cyril Link, I would recommend *A History of the British Secret Service*, by Richard Deacon, Taplinger, 1969.

The parapsychological research projects conducted at the Office of Special Research are based on current work in the field. The Marine Corps has used dowsers to locate mines and tunnels in Vietnam, and this has been reported in the press by Mr. Hanson W. Baldwin, the military writer for *The New York Times*. The Backster Effect, the detection of apparent consciousness in plants through the use of the polygraph, has actually been reported by Mr. Cleve Backster, who is a real person. Parapsychologists do work with trance mediums and, if not yet ready to accept their claims to be able to speak with the dead, at least find some of them to be sincere and possessed of some paranormal powers. I felt a great temptation to include some of the other recent developments in the field, but decided not to, on the grounds that they would have been rejected as utter fantasy by the public. All of

these things, however, can be found in the published literature of parapsychology.

The Office of Special Research, itself, is fiction, at least as far as I know. However, the CIA has experimented with some bizarre techniques for collecting raw intelligence, often with surprising success. I think it improbable that they left this particular stone unturned. Information is highly compartmentalized within the CIA, and one knows little more than he needs to know to do his job. If there were such a unit as OSR, it would not be at all unlikely that I should have remained in ignorance of it during my service with the Agency.

I hope that these remarks serve to satisfy the reader's curiosity. On the other hand, I realize that I cannot escape the same criticism which John Sorel makes of Cyril Link. Someone who once worked for the Central Intelligence Agency must expect to have what he says taken with a large grain of salt. In our time, such skepticism is merely prudent. I would only offer the advice that it should not be limited to former intelligence officers.

Things, after all, are often not what they seem to be.

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