

The Organization Spies

WASHINGTON:

It was Oscar Wilde's contention that "Nature imitates art." The world's three most powerful intelligence agencies are now busily imitating the art of Ian Fleming. Moscow's KGB, Washington's CIA and London's MI-6 have produced competing spy-thrillers, to challenge Fleming's James Bond stories on the best-seller lists.

The KGB entry is *Spy: Twenty Years in Soviet Secret Service*, by Gordon Lonsdale. The joint CIA-MI-6 entry is *The Penkovsky Papers*, by Oleg Penkovsky.

Lonsdale, alias Konon Trovymovich Molody, was an agent in the service of the KGB (the huge Soviet espionage agency) in the United States and Britain, until the British caught him in 1961 and sentenced him to 25 years in prison. Penkovsky, a volunteer spy, was by far the most important and informative of all postwar Western agents. He provided invaluable intelligence to CIA and MI-6 from the spring of 1961, when he first made contact with MI-6, until the fall of 1962, when he was arrested by the KGB.

Lonsdale, who was exchanged for a British agent, is in Moscow. If he can get his hands on the proceeds of his book, he will be a Communist-capitalist—income from the book, a best seller in England, is already over \$130,000, and if the American edition is a best seller, there is more to come. Penkovsky's book will also make a lot of money, but Penkovsky is in no position to enjoy it—he was tried and executed in Moscow in 1963.

The Lonsdale book is undoubtedly a product of KGB-D, as the KGB's psychological war section is called. The style of the book strongly suggests that it was ghost-written by one of several British journalists who have defected to Russia. British intelligence suspects that Kim Philby, the diplomat-journalist-traitor known as "The Third Man" (the first two were diplomat-traitors Burgess and Maclean) ghosted the book. But it seems hard to believe that Philby, an educated man and a good writer, could have turned out the Lonsdale book, except perhaps as a sort of secret spoof.

The purpose of the Lonsdale book is to make maximum trouble between Americans and British, and especially between CIA and MI-6. Americans are pictured throughout as fools, bumbling, or neo-Nazis, and the British as com-

paratively amiable—"I have never considered my work as being directed against the British." But it is a clumsy job, heavy-handed and unconvincing. Filtered through his KGB ghost or ghosts, Lonsdale-Molody emerges very clearly as a vain and silly man, more clown than James Bond.

Vanity is, for some reason, an almost universal characteristic among spies. Penkovsky shares this characteristic, but he is a much more interesting spy than Lonsdale.

The Penkovsky Papers could not conceivably have been published without the approval, and indeed the encouragement, of CIA and MI-6. CIA acknowledges this much—no more. But this reporter will bet a considerable sum that the portions of the book ostensibly written by Penkovsky were at the least very heavily edited, and perhaps written in toto, within the CIA and/or MI-6. The book is clearly based on as much of the information that Penkovsky supplied CIA and MI-6 as those agencies want the KGB to know that they know. Some of the information is fascinating. It ranges from marvelously fatuous instructions to fledgling spies on how to spy in America (motels and golf courses are, it appears, useful instruments of espionage) to revelations of high jinks in the Soviet Establishment. There is even a broad hint that chunky Nikita Khrushchev and Madame Furtseva, the equally chunky minister of culture, were having an affair.

But all this is frosting on the cake. The real purpose of *The Penkovsky Papers* is to make a lot of KGB faces red with anger—or possibly white with fear. KGB operations are described in detail and the identities of many KGB operatives are "blown," so that in many parts of the world the KGB is going to have to start again from scratch.

One can almost hear the CIA men purring with pleasure at the thought. The CIA itself has repeatedly had agents and operations disclosed by American journalists, sometimes on the basis of information supplied by the KGB. In any case, in this game of bookmanship, the KGB has very clearly been out-booked by the CIA and MI-6.

This game of booking and out-booking the opposition outfit is something very new in the spy business. It suggests how the spy business

itself has changed. Espionage used to be a hole-in-corner affair carried on by sly characters out of sleazy apartments. Now, both CIA and KGB are enormous bureaucratic organizations employing thousands of people, in vast edifices, and even MI-6 (which used to operate very effectively on a shoestring) has a skyscraper of its own in London. In short, as Karl Meyer of the *Washington Post* has pointed out, we have entered the era of the organization spy.

But the significance of the Penkovsky book goes deeper than that. The words may or may not have been Penkovsky's, but the information in the book, and the views which it expresses, sound authentic. Penkovsky was, moreover, a perfectly genuine member of the Soviet Establishment, with contacts reaching into the Praesidium itself.

He decided to become an agent for the West on his own initiative, because he was convinced that Khrushchev's policies involved the conscious risk of a nuclear war which would destroy civilization. Obviously, allowance must be made for a certain lack of balance—a man who takes it upon himself to spy against his own country for what he supposes to be the good of the world is not an entirely normal man.

Even so, what Penkovsky writes provides a useful antidote to a current creeping illusion about the Soviet Union. Since the Cuban confrontation of 1963 and the intensification of the Sino-Soviet quarrel, there has been a growing tendency in this country to regard the Russians as good guys—compared with the Chinese Communist bad guys—and even as potential allies and fellow democrats. This, of course, is nonsense.

The Soviet regime has changed in some ways, but it remains a Communist police state, inherently hostile to the West. Penkovsky's *Papers* serve as a useful reminder that the Khrushchev regime, with the support of the present Soviet hierarchy, twice in three years risked nuclear war, first with the Berlin bluff in 1960, then with the Cuban bluff in 1963. There is absolutely no reason to conclude that the new Soviet leaders may not be tempted to bluff again, if the mounting disarray of the Western alliance leads them to suppose that the bluff might work.

Stewart Alsop



Oleg Penkovsky



Gordon Lonsdale

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