

The Spies Out In the Sunshine

Crown to Publish KGB Secrets

1/25/92 By Jeffrey A. Frank
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Ray Cline, the former deputy director of the CIA, wore a slightly startled smile, as if he'd just ascended to intelligence heaven. In a way, he had. Among those surrounding Cline yesterday in the First Amendment Lounge of the National Press Club were two talkative Russian intelligence officials and an American publisher, who was announcing plans to publish some of the KGB's best-kept secrets.

None of the secrets was revealed yesterday.

Crown Publishing Group, though, did reveal that it has acquired the exclusive rights to bring out books based on KGB archives. At the same time, spokesmen for the Russian Intelligence Service (RIS), the KGB's successor in foreign operations, said that the books will do nothing to compromise the Russian federation or the RIS, which they acknowledged continues to spy on the United States.

According to James Wade, the publishing house's vice president and executive editor, "We are co-ventur-

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KGB Secrets

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ers with RIS, in effect. We have a joint editorial board with representatives of the RIS sitting on it." Wade is chairman of the board's American side.

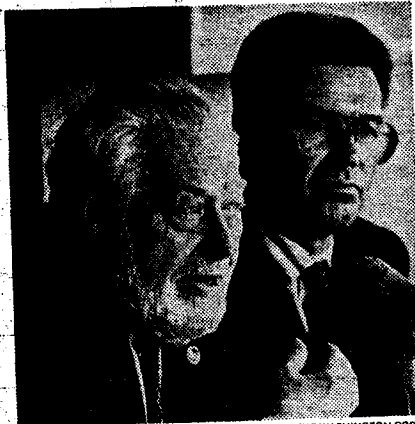
While no one would give away any of the secrets to be published—was Alger Hiss a Soviet spy? what about Julius Rosenberg?—Michelle Sidrane, president and publisher of Crown, said the upcoming books would focus on some pivotal historical events: the 1961 Berlin crisis; the 1962 Cuban missile crisis; Soviet penetration of British and American intelligence organizations.

Sidrane would not reveal what Crown, a division of Random House, is paying, but some have suggested that it approaches seven figures. The project as described will ultimately include five books, written by separate historians—none yet identified—published over the next 10 years. Scholarly companion volumes will be published by a university press, whose name Crown would not reveal yesterday. Wade and Sidrane said arrangements with the university press were not yet complete.

"I hope this project will be as successful as any operation launched by Russian intelligences services," said Yuri Kobaladze, the chief press spokesman for the RIS. Kobaladze also emphasized what he says is the project's authenticity. "Please," he said, "don't believe people who are coming from Moscow, whether Americans or Russians, who are claiming they have access to archives of the Russian intelligence service and are saying the documents are for sale."

That came as news to Davis Entertainment Television, which last January announced it had acquired exclusive rights "to present to international audiences top-secret KGB accounts never before made public." Among projects announced by the Hollywood company was a film about how the Soviet Union got atomic secrets. A Davis spokesman yesterday said the RIS regarded film rights and print rights as separate entities, and that talks aimed to wrap up a deal for those rights were continuing. He said the company remains in close contact with "Oleg and Yuri."

At the press club, Yuri Kobaladze and Oleg Tsarev, a veteran, KGB official who is now a consultant to the RIS press office, seemed un-



BY CRAIG HERNDON—THE WASHINGTON POST

Espionage experts Ray Cline, left, and John Costello at yesterday's press conference.

easy that anyone might have the impression that an American publisher had gotten permission to go foraging at will through 75 years of KGB history.

"We have taken extreme measures to protect our archives," said Kobaladze with a gentle smile. "We'll never do anything which can endanger the national interest of Russia. We'll never do anything to harm the personnel working for Russian intelligence."

The agreement between Crown and Russian intelligence evolved from an earlier collaboration between John Costello, a British historian, and Tsarev. Using other KGB files, Tsarev and Costello last year published a book about Rudolph Hess. Currently, they are working on a biography of Soviet defector Alexander Orlov that also draws on KGB files. That book will also be published by Crown. Both Costello and Tsarev were eager to talk about the Orlov book, which will be published early next year.

Kobaladze said permission to release some former KGB archives was ultimately granted by Yevgeni Primakov, the director of the RIS. He said the decision never reached the desk of Russian President Boris Yeltsin.

Wade said he'd brought the press conference to Washington because Washington was the home of intelligence operations. But beyond the Beltway, Soviet scholars were worried. In a telephone interview, Stalin biographer Adam Ulam, of Harvard's Russian Research Center, asked, "Was it a legal transaction between the

former Soviet government and the firm? And of course a great deal depends on how competent people are to work through those archives. . . . Can a single publishing firm get exclusive rights to that kind of document? It goes a little bit against accepted rules."

According to participants, the answer is a qualified yes. Crown will indeed have exclusive rights, and Wade said appeals from other parties for specific documents should be made directly to the Russians.

"We're not trying to block anybody or put a hold on anything," he insisted.

It is in any case far from certain that unraveled mysteries from the KGB archives will be able to keep pace with all the other revelations of the post-Soviet era. Several academic institutions have made private arrangements to get important records from the Russians. A Library of Congress exhibition titled "Revelations From the Russian Archives" is currently showing once-top-secret documents, such as minutes from the Politburo of the Central Committee that document KGB deployments prior to the 1979 invasion of Afghanistan. Meanwhile, in Moscow, documents are being leaked to Russian and Western journalists; many of them contain material embarrassing to officials still living.

In Washington, even those close to the Crown-RIS project were still coming to terms with it.

"We're about to step through the looking glass," said Timothy Naftali, a fellow at the John M. Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University and a project adviser.

"I can tell you that the intelligence world has turned upside down," said Ray Cline, who began his intelligence career during World War II, participated in the Cuban missile crisis and, in January, met with Fidel Castro. "This is a strange world for me, you know. It's hard for me to handle it," said Cline, now an unofficial consultant to the project.

David Wise, a chronicler of U.S. intelligence for 30 years, watched yesterday's announcement with interest and skepticism: "It looks like it's quite well organized, but spy agencies are not known for handing out a lot of information."

And what about some really shocking secrets?

"Don't think we are going to reveal everything, you know," said Kobaladze. "Don't worry about that."