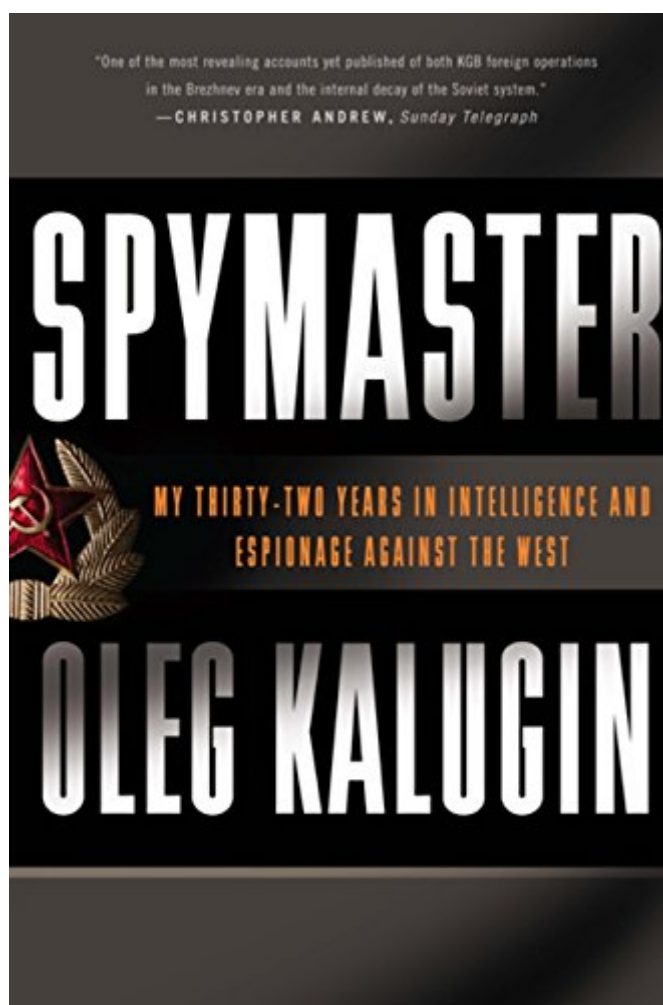


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Spymaster: My Thirty-two Years In Intelligence And Espionage Against The West



Synopsis

Oleg Kalugin oversaw the work of American spies, matched wits with the CIA, and became one of the youngest generals in KGB history. Even so, he grew increasingly disillusioned with the Soviet system. In 1990, he went public, exposing the intelligence agency's shadowy methods. Revised and updated in the light of the KGB's enduring presence in Russian politics, *Spymaster* is Kalugin's impressively illuminating memoir of the final years of the Soviet Union.

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Customer Reviews

SPYMASTER by Oleg Kalugin 2/27/10 This recently released book (c2009) is an autobiography of Kalugin, who spent 32 years in Soviet intelligence. As a young man he was a KGB agent sent to New York disguised as a Fulbright Scholar. During his second tour of duty in the US he took another "cover" in order to function as the director of political intelligence for Russia's Washington, DC "Resident" (the KGB director of spying for the region) for five years. At one point Kalugin became one of the "handlers" of the famous naval spy John Walker. In 1974, at age 40, he became the youngest general in the postwar history of the KGB. In 1970 he became the Deputy Chief of Foreign Counterintelligence. Three years later he was appointed the director for that branch of the KGB, a

position he held for seven years. He became very critical of the KGB and a number of corrupt Communist leaders and aligned himself with the democracy movement during and after the Gorbachev era. Needless to say, he created quite a few enemies and during the Putin regime, while Kalugin was a temporary resident of the United States involved in business endeavors, he was tried in absentia for treason and sentenced to 15 years in prison. At that point he was granted political asylum in America. In August 2003 he became a U.S. citizen. I have an interest in espionage and have read quite a few books on the subject. I found this book very well written and, for the most part, quite interesting and informative. There are many fascinating (to me) stories related to his experiences in his different roles. There are also areas where he fills in the gaps left by other books, for example, in regards to the famous British spy Kim Philby and his last years in Russia. Kalugin took an active interest in Philby's well-being and they became good friends. Another of the author's unique contributions relates to the democracy movement in Russia. Writing as an active participant in that movement, he gives his perception of events and people during the final years of the Soviet Union and the time after its demise. There were parts of the second half of the book that got a little boring for me. In Chapter 7 ("Collision"), especially, I got tired of lengthy criticisms of KGB and Politburo officials that he had to deal with and/or that he had conflicts with, as he fell from grace within the KGB (even if some of that criticism might have been justified). I also got tired of all the negative descriptions, in the last part of the book, of those who opposed the efforts to change the Soviet Union (/Russia). As would be the tendency of most of us human beings, in these parts of the book, he presents himself in a positive light, justifying his behavior, while presenting those who opposed him or frustrated his desires in a very negative light. To a degree he reflects the strong conditioning of those of us with "male egos". He has considerable disrespect for people who [due to their human conditioning] lack courage and he sympathized "with some of the married agents who described the disgust they felt at having to make love to unattractive older women" (p.197). Interestingly he maintained an intense disdain for Russians who spied against, and/or defected from, their own country while looking at those who betrayed the West as spies and/or defectors as true heroes. This apparent contradiction was even the case after he became disenchanted with Russia and Communism. (He relates a dialogue he had with one Russian who defected to the West as follows: "...You're scum....You're a traitor. Why did you do that, betray your own country?" [p.234] He even seemed to be judgmental of KGB agent Alexander Orlov, who only defected to the West to avoid being a victim of Stalin's insane purges.) For the most part I found Kalugin (or at least the Kalugin that is portrayed in the book as I perceived it) to be a pleasant, "descent," and at times sensitive, human being (for a KGB agent that is, who authorized "dirty tricks" against the West, etc).

He was disturbed by assassinations, for example, and events like the 1968 Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia helped erode the blind faith he once held in the Soviet system. Is his story "true"? In general, our stories are not really true. They (we) are too subjective. We can only say that our stories reflect "our" truth. Each character in his book would tell the story a little (or a lot) differently. And as Anais Nin (apparently) said, "We do not see things as they are, we see them as we are." We meet the world with our projections. And what we react to most in others often reflects something within ourselves of which we are not conscious. Some reviewers of this book on found it boring. Although this was my experience while reading parts of the book, I think that to some extent this depends on the reader. If one is really interested in this subject he/she will find it very informative and, for the most part, will probably find it interesting. It definitely contributes some fresh material to its subject matter. Overall, I enjoyed it.

For anyone that's ever been curious about what was going on on the Soviet side during the Cold War, this is the book to read. I found Mr. Kalugin's life in the KGB and afterwards to be nothing short of fascinating. I've read enough books about America's intelligence agencies, both before, during, and after the Cold War and to be able to compare what America thought was going on in Soviet espionage/intelligence and what was really going on was very interesting. Mr. Kalugin had a lot of guts to live the life he did in the KGB and what eventually came after his career in the the KGB, and I find him an admirable man. I was only disappointed with this book when I was finished reading it, I didn't want it to end. I highly recommend this book to anyone that's interested in intelligence, espionage, the Cold War, and culture comparisons between America and the Soviet Union during all those years that we were scared to death of each other (which, unfortunately, we seem to be headed to again, and, although the fact the Soviet Union doesn't exist anymore, although I suspect Mr. Putin's desire would be to have the hammer and sickle flag fly again). Long story short: read this book, it's fascinating, interesting, and I learned a lot. Kudos to Oleg Kalugin on sharing his story.

Oleg was a master KGB officer. You follow his life, and get some background on the thought processes and methods of his Tradecraft. Besides recruiting agents, they do rather boring things: planting disinformation, etc. Became a NKVD/KGB general. became disillusioned and defected. Read this, then pick up a copy of a Book called Spymaster, startling cold war revelations.....That turns out to be Oleg's KGB supervisor, who also defected after the fall of the USSR

I bought this book for a class I am taking on the Cold War. This memoir offers a look at someone who was deeply involved with Soviet intelligence during the Cold War, both in America and back in the USSR. It offers a look into what life as a KGB spy could be like during the Cold War. Despite the length, it was an engaging read. What I liked most was that Kalugin was honest about his support for the Communist party in the early days and how it was only as the years went on and the failings of the system began to show that he began to doubt. He admits that he rationalized actions that, looking back, he wishes he hadn't supported. That to me is far more genuine than someone who insists they had disagreed all along. Especially in the early days, you didn't make it far in either the KGB or the diplomatic services if you weren't dedicated to the cause. The book is rather controversial as Kalugin is considered a traitor by Russia. For anyone interested in the Cold War, this is a good read.

One of the most credible accounts about Cold war spy wars from the Russian side. A senior KGB officer, Kalugin's position as chief of external counterintelligence (1973-79), as well as deputy chief of external counterintelligence or his postings in US gave him a unique knowledge about the most important KGB operations in the world. His revelations told us about the high numbers of spies recruited in different countries. Interesting accounts, but vague, about early moles in FBI, ASIO, RCMP (extremely useful for KGB) and French intelligence (harsh critique). A lot of detailed spy cases are presented (Walker, Cook, Vetrov, Levchenko); also, useful information about 1968 Prague Spring, political life in India etc. His clash with the Soviet system is not the most enjoyable part of the book, but the stories about Philby et Co are good. Interesting portraits of Soviet hierarchy leaders (Andropov, Brezhnev and many others). No doubt, his confessions added new information about spy wars during '60-'70. Kalugin's book and Cherkasin's "Spy handler" are the best Russian books about Cold War espionage. A really good contribution to the Cold war history; highly recommended.

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