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AND



THE

TRAITOR

The Greatest Espionage
Story of the Cold War

WITH A NEW AFTERWORD



The Spy and the Traitor

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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The Spy and the Traitor

The Greatest Espionage Story of the Cold War

BEN MACINTYRE



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In memory of Joanna Macintyre (1934–2015)

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‘He had two lives: one open, seen and known by all who cared to know . . . and the other running its course in secret.’

Anton Chekhov, ‘The Lady with the Dog’

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Introduction

18 May 1985

For the KGB's counter-intelligence section, Directorate K, this was a routine bugging job.

It took less than a minute to spring the locks on the front door of the flat on the eighth floor of 220 Leninsky Prospekt, a Moscow tower block occupied by KGB officers and their families. While two men in gloves and overalls set about methodically searching the apartment, two technicians wired the place, swiftly and invisibly, implanting eavesdropping devices behind the wallpaper and skirting boards, inserting a live microphone into the telephone mouthpiece, and video cameras in the light fittings in the sitting room, bedroom and kitchen. By the time they had finished, an hour later, there was barely a corner in the flat where the KGB did not have eyes and ears. Finally, they put on face masks and sprinkled radioactive dust on the clothes and shoes in the closet, sufficiently low in concentration to avoid poisoning, but enough to enable the KGB's Geiger counters to track the wearer's movements. Then they left, and carefully locked the front door behind them.

A few hours later, a senior Russian intelligence officer landed at Moscow airport on the Aeroflot flight from London.

Colonel Oleg Antonyevich Gordievsky of the KGB was at the pinnacle of his career. A prodigy of the Soviet intelligence service, he had diligently risen through the ranks, serving in Scandinavia, Moscow and Britain with hardly a blemish on his record. And now, at the age of forty-six, he had been promoted to chief of the KGB station in London, a plum posting, and invited to return to Moscow to be formally anointed by the head of the KGB. A career spy, Gordievsky was tipped to ascend to the uppermost ranks of that vast and ruthless security and intelligence network that controlled the Soviet Union.

A stocky, athletic figure, Gordievsky strode confidently through

the airport crowds. Inside him, though, a low terror bubbled. For Oleg Gordievsky, KGB veteran, faithful secret servant of the Soviet Union, was a British spy.

Recruited a dozen years earlier by MI6, Britain's foreign-intelligence service, the agent codenamed NOCTON had proven to be one of the most valuable spies in history. The immense amount of information he fed back to his British handlers had changed the course of the Cold War, cracking open Soviet spy networks, helping to avert nuclear war and furnishing the West with a unique insight into the Kremlin's thinking during a critically dangerous period in world affairs. Both Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher had been briefed on the extraordinary trove of secrets provided by the Russian spy, though neither the American President nor the British Prime Minister knew his real identity. Even Gordievsky's young wife was entirely unaware of his double life.

Gordievsky's appointment as KGB *rezident* (the Russian term for a KGB head of station, known as a *rezidentura*) had prompted rejoicing among the tiny circle of MI6 officers privy to the case. As the most senior Soviet intelligence operative in Britain, Gordievsky would henceforth have access to the innermost secrets of Russian espionage: he would be able to inform the West what the KGB was planning to do, before it did it; the KGB in Britain would be neutered. And yet the abrupt summons back to Moscow had unsettled the NOCTON team. Some sensed a trap. At a hastily convened meeting in a London safe house with his MI6 handlers, Gordievsky had been offered the option to defect and remain in Britain with his family. Everyone at the meeting understood the stakes: if he returned as official KGB *rezident* then MI6, the CIA and their Western allies would hit the intelligence jackpot, but if Gordievsky was walking into a trap he would lose everything, including his life. He had thought long and hard before making up his mind: 'I will go back.'

Once again, the MI6 officers went over Gordievsky's emergency escape plan, codenamed PIMLICO, and drawn up seven years earlier in the hope that it would never have to be activated. MI6 had never exfiltrated anyone from the USSR before, let alone a KGB officer. Elaborate and hazardous, the escape plan could be triggered only as a last resort.

Gordievsky had been trained to spot danger. As he walked through Moscow airport, his nerves ragged with internal stress, he saw signs of peril everywhere. The passport officer seemed to study his papers for an inordinate length of time, before waving him through. Where was the official who was supposed to be meeting him, a minimal courtesy for a KGB colonel arriving back from overseas? The airport was always stiff with surveillance, but today the nondescript men and women apparently standing around idly seemed even more numerous than normal. Gordievsky climbed into a taxi, telling himself that if the KGB knew the truth, he would have been arrested the moment he set foot on Russian soil, and already on his way to the KGB cells, to face interrogation and torture, followed by execution.

As far as he could tell, no one followed him as he entered the familiar apartment block on Leninsky Prospekt, and took the lift to the eighth floor. He had not been inside the family flat since January.

The first lock on the front door opened easily, and then the second. But the door would not budge. The third lock on the door, an old-fashioned deadbolt dating back to the building of the apartment block, had been locked.

But Gordievsky never used the third lock. Indeed, he had never had the key. That must mean that someone with a skeleton key had been inside, and on leaving had mistakenly triple-locked the door. That someone must be the KGB.

The fears of the previous week crystallized in a freezing rush, with the chilling, paralysing recognition that his apartment had been entered, searched and probably bugged. He was under suspicion. Someone had betrayed him. The KGB was watching him. The spy was being spied upon by his fellow spies.

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PART ONE

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I. The KGB

Oleg Gordievsky was born into the KGB; shaped by it, loved by it, twisted, damaged and very nearly destroyed by it. The Soviet spy service was in his heart and in his blood. His father worked for the intelligence service all his life, and wore his KGB uniform every day, including weekends. The Gordievskys lived amid the spy fraternity in a designated apartment block, ate special food reserved for officers, and spent their free time socializing with other spy-families. Gordievsky was a child of the KGB.

The KGB, the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* or committee of state security, was the most complex and far-reaching intelligence agency ever created. The direct successor of Stalin's spy network, it combined the roles of foreign- and domestic-intelligence gathering, internal-security enforcement and state police. Oppressive, mysterious and ubiquitous, the KGB penetrated and controlled every aspect of Soviet life. It rooted out internal dissent, guarded the communist leadership, mounted espionage and counter-intelligence operations against enemy powers, and cowed the peoples of the USSR into abject obedience. It recruited agents and planted spies worldwide, gathering, buying and stealing military, political and scientific secrets from anywhere and everywhere. At the height of its power, with more than one million officers, agents and informants, the KGB shaped Soviet society more profoundly than any other institution.

To the West, the initials were a byword for internal terror and external aggression and subversion, shorthand for all the cruelty of a totalitarian regime run by a faceless official mafia. But the KGB was not regarded that way by those who lived under its stern rule. Certainly it inspired fear and obedience, but the KGB was also admired as a Praetorian Guard, a bulwark against Western imperialist and capitalist aggression, and the guardian of communism. Membership of this elite and privileged force was a source of admiration and pride.

Those who joined the service did so for life. 'There is no such thing as a former KGB man,' the former KGB officer Vladimir Putin once said. This was an exclusive club to join; and an impossible one to leave. Entering the ranks of the KGB was an honour and a duty to those with sufficient talent and ambition to do so.

Oleg Gordievsky never seriously contemplated doing anything else.

His father, Anton Lavrentyevich Gordievsky, the son of a railway worker, had been a teacher before the Revolution of 1917 transformed him into a dedicated, unquestioning communist, a rigid enforcer of ideological orthodoxy. 'The Party was God,' his son later wrote, and the older Gordievsky never wavered in his devotion, even when his faith demanded that he take part in unspeakable crimes. In 1932, he helped enforce the 'Sovietization' of Kazakhstan, organizing the expropriation of food from peasants to feed the Soviet armies and cities. Around 1.5 million people perished in the resulting famine. Anton saw state-induced starvation at close quarters. That year, he joined the office of state security, and then the NKVD, the Peoples' Commissariat for Internal Affairs, Stalin's secret police and the precursor of the KGB. An officer in the political directorate, he was responsible for political discipline and indoctrination. Anton married Olga Nikolayevna Gornova, a 24-year-old statistician, and the couple moved into a Moscow apartment block reserved for the intelligence elite. A first child, Vasili, was born in 1932. The Gordievskys thrived under Stalin.

When Comrade Stalin announced that the Revolution was facing a lethal threat from within, Anton Gordievsky stood ready to help remove the traitors. The Great Purge of 1936–8 saw the wholesale liquidation of 'enemies of the state': suspected fifth columnists and hidden Trotskyists, terrorists and saboteurs, counter-revolutionary spies, Party and government officials, peasants, Jews, teachers, generals, members of the intelligentsia, Poles, Red Army soldiers and many more. Most were entirely innocent. In Stalin's paranoid police state, the safest way to ensure survival was to denounce someone else. 'Better that ten innocent people should suffer than one spy get away,' said Nikolai Yezhov, chief of the NKVD. 'When you chop wood, chips fly.' The informers whispered, the torturers and executioners set to work, and the Siberian gulags swelled to bursting. But as in

every revolution, the enforcers themselves inevitably became suspect. The NKVD began to investigate and purge itself. At the height of the bloodletting, the Gordievskys' apartment block was raided more than a dozen times in a six-month period. The arrests came at night: the man of the family was led away first, and then the rest.

It seems probable that some of these enemies of the state were identified by Anton Gordievsky. 'The NKVD is always right,' he said: a conclusion both wholly sensible, and entirely wrong.

A second son, Oleg Antonyevich Gordievsky, was born on 10 October 1938, just as the Great Terror was winding down, and war was looming. To friends and neighbours, the Gordievskys appeared to be ideal Soviet citizens, ideologically pure, loyal to Party and state, and now the parents to two strapping boys. A daughter, Marina, was born seven years after Oleg. The Gordievskys were well fed, privileged and secure.

But on closer examination there were fissures in the family façade, and layers of deception beneath the surface. Anton Gordievsky never spoke about what he had done during the famines, the purges and the terror. The older Gordievsky was a prime example of the species *Homo Sovieticus*, an obedient state servant forged by communist repression. But underneath he was fearful, horrified and perhaps gnawed by guilt. Oleg later came to see his father as 'a frightened man'.

Olga Gordievsky, Oleg's mother, was made of less tractable material. She never joined the Party, and she did not believe that the NKVD was infallible. Her father had been dispossessed of his water-mill by the communists; her brother sent to the Eastern Siberian Gulag for criticizing collective agriculture; she had seen many friends dragged from their homes and marched away in the night. With a peasant's ingrained common sense, she understood the caprice and vindictiveness of state terror, but kept her mouth shut.

Oleg and Vasili, separated in age by six years, grew up in wartime. One of Gordievsky's earliest memories was of watching lines of bedraggled German prisoners being paraded through the streets of Moscow, 'trapped, guarded and led like animals'. Anton was frequently absent for long periods, lecturing the troops on Party ideology.

Oleg Gordievsky dutifully learned the tenets of communist orthodoxy: he attended School 130, where he showed an early aptitude for

history and languages; he learned about the heroes of communism, at home and abroad. Despite the thick veil of disinformation surrounding the West, foreign countries fascinated him. At the age of six, he began reading *British Ally*, a propaganda sheet put out in Russian by the British embassy to encourage Anglo-Russian understanding. He studied German. As expected of all teenagers, he joined the Komsomol, the Communist Youth League.

His father brought home three official newspapers and spouted the communist propaganda they contained. The NKVD morphed into the KGB, and Anton Gordievsky obediently followed. Oleg's mother exuded a quiet resistance that only occasionally revealed itself in waspish, half-whispered asides. Religious worship was illegal under communism, and the boys were raised as atheists, but their maternal grandmother had Vasili secretly baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church, and would have christened Oleg too had their horrified father not found out, and intervened.

Oleg Gordievsky grew up in a tight-knit, loving family suffused with duplicity. Anton Gordievsky venerated the Party and proclaimed himself a fearless upholder of communism, but inside was a small and terrified man who had witnessed terrible events. Olga Gordievsky, the ideal KGB wife, nursed a secret disdain for the system. Oleg's grandmother secretly worshipped an illegal, outlawed God. None of the adults in the family revealed what they really felt – to each other, or anyone else. Amid the stifling conformity of Stalin's Russia, it was possible to believe differently in secret but far too dangerous for honesty, even to members of your own family. From boyhood, Oleg saw that it was possible to live a double life, to love those around you while concealing your true inner self, to appear to be one person to the external world and quite another inside.

Oleg Gordievsky emerged from school with a silver medal, head of the Komsomol, a competent, intelligent, athletic, unquestioning and unremarkable product of the Soviet system. But he had also learned to compartmentalize. In different ways, his father, mother and grandmother were all people in disguise. The young Gordievsky grew up around secrets.

Stalin died in 1953. Three years later he was denounced, at the 20th

Party Congress, by his successor, Nikita Khrushchev. Anton Gordievsky was staggered. The official condemnation of Stalin, his son believed, 'went a long way towards destroying the ideological and philosophical foundations of his life'. He did not like the way Russia was changing. But his son did.

The 'Khrushchev Thaw' was brief and restricted, but a period of genuine liberalization that saw the relaxation of censorship and the release of thousands of political prisoners. These were heady times to be young, Russian and hopeful.

At the age of seventeen, Oleg enrolled at the prestigious Moscow State Institute of International Relations. There, exhilarated by the new atmosphere, he engaged in earnest discussions with his peers about how to bring about 'socialism with a human face'. He went too far. Some of his mother's nonconformity had seeped into him. One day, he wrote a speech, naïve in its defence of freedom and democracy, concepts he barely understood. He recorded it in the language laboratory, and played it to some fellow students. They were appalled. 'You must destroy this at once, Oleg, and never mention these things again.' Suddenly fearful, he wondered if one of his classmates had informed the authorities of his 'radical' opinions. The KGB had spies inside the Institute.

The limits of Khrushchev's reformism were brutally demonstrated in 1956 when the Soviet tanks rolled into Hungary to put down a nationwide uprising against Soviet rule. Despite the all-embracing Soviet censorship and propaganda, news of the crushed rebellion filtered back to Russia. 'All warmth disappeared,' Oleg recalled of the ensuing clampdown. 'An icy wind set in.'

The Institute of International Relations was the Soviet Union's most elite university, described by Henry Kissinger as 'the Russian Harvard'. Run by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it was the premier training ground for diplomats, scientists, economists, politicians – and spies. Gordievsky studied history, geography, economics and international relations, all through the warping prism of communist ideology. The Institute provided instruction in fifty-six languages, more than any other university in the world. Language skills offered one clear pathway into the KGB and the foreign travel that he craved. Already fluent

in German, he applied to study English, but the courses were oversubscribed. 'Learn Swedish,' suggested his older brother, who had already joined the KGB. 'It is the doorway to the rest of Scandinavia.' Gordievsky took his advice.

The Institute library stocked some foreign newspapers and periodicals which, though heavily redacted, offered a glimpse of the wider world. These he began to read, discreetly, for showing overt interest in the West was itself grounds for suspicion. Sometimes at night he would secretly listen to the BBC World Service or Voice of America, despite the radio-jamming system imposed by Soviet censors, and picked up 'the first faint scent of truth'.

Like all human beings, in later life Gordievsky tended to see his past through the lens of experience, to imagine that he had always secretly harboured the seeds of insubordination, to believe his fate was somehow hardwired into his character. It was not. As a student, he was a keen communist, anxious to serve the Soviet state in the KGB, like his father and brother. The Hungarian Uprising had caught his youthful imagination, but he was no revolutionary. 'I was still within the system but my feelings of disillusionment were growing.' In this he was no different from many of his student contemporaries.

At the age of nineteen, Gordievsky took up cross-country running. Something about the solitary nature of the sport appealed to him, the rhythm of intense exertion over a long period, in private competition with himself, testing his own limits. Oleg could be gregarious, attractive to women and flirtatious. His looks were bluntly handsome, with hair swept back from his forehead and open, rather soft features. In repose, his expression seemed stern, but when his eyes flashed with dark humour, his face lit up. In company he was often convivial and comradely, but there was something hard and hidden inside. He was not lonely, or a loner, but he was comfortable in his own company. He seldom revealed his feelings. Typically hungry for self-improvement, Oleg believed that cross-country running was 'character building'. For hours he would run, through Moscow's streets and parks, alone with his thoughts.

One of the few students he grew close to was Stanislaw Kaplan, a fellow runner on the university track team. 'Standa' Kaplan was

Czechoslovakian, and had already obtained a degree from Charles University in Prague by the time he arrived at the Institute as one of several hundred gifted students from the Soviet bloc. Like others from countries only recently subjugated to communism, Kaplan's 'individuality had not been stifled', Gordievsky wrote, years later. A year older, he was studying to be a military translator. The two young men found they shared compatible ambitions and similar ideas. 'He was liberal-minded and held strongly sceptical views about communism,' wrote Gordievsky, who found Kaplan's forthright opinions exciting, and slightly alarming. With his dark good looks, Standa was a magnet to women. The two students became firm friends, running together, chasing girls and eating in a Czech restaurant off Gorky Park.

An equally important influence was his idolized older brother, Vasili, who was now training to become an 'illegal', one of the Soviet Union's vast global army of deep undercover agents.

The KGB ran two distinct species of spy in foreign countries. The first worked under formal cover, as a member of the Soviet diplomatic or consular staff, a cultural or military attaché, accredited journalist or trade representative. Diplomatic protection meant that these 'legal' spies could not be prosecuted for espionage if their activities were uncovered, but only declared *persona non grata*, and expelled from the country. By contrast, an 'illegal' spy (*nelegal*, in Russian) had no official status, usually travelled under a false name with fake papers, and simply blended invisibly into whatever country he or she was posted to. (In the West such spies are known as NOCs, standing for Non-Official Cover.) The KGB planted illegals all over the world, posing as ordinary citizens, submerged and subversive. Like legal spies, they gathered information, recruited agents and conducted various forms of espionage. Sometimes, as 'sleepers', they might remain hidden for long periods before being activated. These were also potential fifth columnists, poised to go into battle should war erupt between East and West. Illegals operated beneath the official radar and therefore could not be financed in ways that might be traced, nor communicate through secure diplomatic channels. But unlike spies accredited to an embassy, they left few traces for counter-intelligence investigators to

follow. Every Soviet embassy contained a permanent KGB station, or *rezidentura*, with a number of KGB officers in various official guises, all under the command of a *rezident* (head of station in MI6 parlance, or station chief to the CIA). One task facing Western counter-intelligence was working out which Soviet officials were genuine diplomats, and which were really spies. Tracking down the illegals was far harder.

The First Chief Directorate (FCD) was the KGB department responsible for foreign intelligence. Within this, Directorate S (standing for 'special') trained, deployed and managed the illegals. Vasili Gordievsky was formally recruited into Directorate S in 1960.

The KGB maintained an office inside the Institute of International Relations, staffed by two officers on the lookout for potential recruits. Vasili mentioned to his bosses in Directorate S that his younger brother, proficient in languages, might be interested in the same line of work.

Early in 1961, Oleg Gordievsky was invited in for a chat, and then told to go to a building near the KGB headquarters in Dzerzhinsky Square, where he was politely interviewed, in German, by a middle-aged woman, who complimented him on his grasp of the language. From that instant, he was part of the system. Gordievsky did not seek to join the KGB; this was not a club you applied to. It chose you.

Gordievsky's time at university was nearing an end when he was sent to East Berlin for a six-month work-experience posting, as a translator in the Russian embassy. Thrilled at the prospect of his first trip abroad, Gordievsky's excitement spiked when he was called into Directorate S for a briefing on East Germany. The communist-ruled German Democratic Republic was a Soviet satellite, but that did not make it immune from the attentions of the KGB. Vasili was already living there as an illegal. Oleg readily agreed to make contact with his brother and carry out a few 'small tasks' for his new, unofficial employer. Gordievsky arrived in East Berlin on 12 August 1961, and travelled to a student hostel inside the KGB enclave in the suburb of Karlshorst.

Over the previous months, the stream of East Germans fleeing to the West through West Berlin had reached a torrent. By 1961, some

3.5 million East Germans, roughly 20 per cent of the entire population, had joined the mass exodus from communist rule.

Gordievsky awoke the next morning to find that East Berlin had been invaded by bulldozers. The East German government, prompted by Moscow, was taking radical steps to staunch the flow: the construction of the Berlin Wall was under way, a physical barrier to cut off West from East Berlin and the rest of East Germany. The 'Anti-Fascist Protection Wall' was, in reality, a prison perimeter, erected by East Germany to keep its own citizens penned in. More than 150 miles of concrete and wire, with bunkers, anti-vehicle trenches and chain fencing, the Berlin Wall was the physical manifestation of the Iron Curtain, and one of the nastiest structures man has ever built.

Gordievsky watched in horrified awe as East German workers tore up the streets alongside the border to make them impassable to vehicles, and troops unrolled miles of barbed wire. Some East Germans, realizing that their escape route was closing fast, made desperate bids for freedom by clambering over the barricades or attempting to swim the canals that formed part of the border. Guards lined up along the frontier with orders to shoot anyone attempting to cross from East to West. The new wall made a powerful impression on the 22-year-old Gordievsky: 'Only a physical barrier, reinforced by armed guards in their watchtowers, could keep the East Germans in their socialist paradise and stop them fleeing to the West.'

But Gordievsky's shock at the overnight construction of the Berlin Wall did not prevent him faithfully carrying out the orders of the KGB. Fear of authority was instinctive, the habit of obedience ingrained. Directorate S had provided the name of a German woman, a former KGB informant; Gordievsky's instructions were to sound her out and establish if she was prepared to continue providing information. He found her address through a local police station. The middle-aged woman who answered the door seemed unfazed by the sudden arrival of a young man holding a bunch of flowers. Over a cup of tea, she made it clear she was prepared to continue cooperating with the KGB. Gordievsky eagerly wrote up his first KGB report. Only months later did he realize what had really happened: 'It was I, rather than she, who was being tested.'

That Christmas he linked up with Vasili, who was living under a false identity in Leipzig. Oleg did not reveal to Vasili his horror at the construction of the Berlin Wall. His older brother was already a professional KGB officer, who would not have approved of such ideological wavering. Just as their mother had concealed her true feelings from her husband, so the brothers kept their secrets from one another: Oleg had no idea what Vasili was really doing in East Germany, and Vasili had no clue what Oleg was really feeling. The brothers attended a performance of the *Christmas Oratorio*, which left Oleg 'intensely moved'. Russia seemed 'a spiritual desert' by comparison, where only approved composers could be heard, and 'class hostile' church music, such as Bach's, was deemed decadent and bourgeois, and banned.

Gordievsky was profoundly affected by the few months he spent in East Germany: he had witnessed the great physical and symbolic division of Europe into rival ideologies; he had tasted cultural fruits denied to him in Moscow; and he had started spying. 'It was exciting to have an early taste of what I might do if I joined the KGB.'

In reality, he already had.

Back in Moscow, Gordievsky was told to report for duty at the KGB on 31 July 1962. Why did he join an organization enforcing an ideology he had already started to question? KGB work was glamorous, offering the promise of foreign travel. Secrecy is seductive. He was also ambitious. The KGB might change. He might change. Russia might change. And the pay and privileges were good.

Olga Gordievsky was dismayed to learn that her younger son would be following his father and brother into the intelligence service. For once, she openly voiced her anger at the regime, and the apparatus of oppression that sustained it. Oleg pointed out that he would not be working for the internal KGB but in the foreign section, the First Chief Directorate, an elite organization staffed by intellectuals speaking foreign languages, doing sophisticated work that required skill and education. 'It's not really like the KGB,' he told her. 'It's really intelligence and diplomatic work.' Olga turned away, and left the room. Anton Gordievsky said nothing. Oleg detected no pride in his father's demeanour. Years later, when he came to understand the full scale of Stalinist repression, Gordievsky

wondered whether his father, now approaching retirement, had been 'ashamed of all those crimes and atrocities committed by the KGB, and simply afraid to discuss the work of the KGB with his own son'. Or perhaps Anton Gordievsky was struggling to maintain his double life, a pillar of the KGB too terrified to warn his son against what he was getting into.

In his last summer as a civilian, Gordievsky joined Standa Kaplan at the Institute's holiday camp on the Black Sea coast. Kaplan had decided to stay on for an additional month, before returning to join the StB, Czechoslovakia's formidable intelligence service. The two friends would soon be colleagues, allies in espionage on behalf of the Soviet bloc. For a month, they camped under the pines, ran every day, swam, sunbathed, and discussed women, music and politics. Kaplan was increasingly critical of the communist system. Gordievsky was flattered to be the recipient of such dangerous confidences: 'There was an understanding between us, a trust.'

Soon after his return to Czechoslovakia, Kaplan wrote a letter to Gordievsky. In among the gossip about the girls he had met and the fine time they would have together if his friend came to visit ('We'll empty all the pubs and wine cellars in Prague'), Kaplan made a highly significant request: 'Oleg, might you have a copy of *Pravda* with Yevtushenko's poem about Stalin?' The poem in question was 'Heirs of Stalin' by Yevgeny Yevtushenko, a direct attack on Stalinism by one of Russia's most outspoken and influential poets. The poem was a demand that the Soviet government ensure that Stalin would 'never rise again' and a warning that some in the leadership still hankered for the brutal Stalinist past: 'By the past, I mean the neglect of the people's welfare, false charges, the jailing of the innocent . . . "Why care?" some say, but I can't remain inactive. / While Stalin's heirs walk this earth.' The poem had caused a sensation when it was published in the official newspaper of the Communist Party, and had also been reprinted in Czechoslovakia. 'It had a powerful effect on some of our people, with a certain tinge of discontent,' Kaplan wrote to Gordievsky. He said he wanted to compare the Czech translation to the original Russian. But in reality Kaplan was sending a coded message of complicity to his friend, an acknowledgement that they shared the

sentiments expressed by Yevtushenko and, like the poet, would not remain inactive in the face of Stalin's legacy.

The KGB's 'Red Banner' elite training academy, deep in the woods fifty miles north of Moscow, was codenamed School 101, an ironic and entirely unconscious echo of George Orwell's Room 101 in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, the basement torture chamber where the Party breaks a prisoner's resistance by subjecting him to his worst nightmare.

Here Gordievsky and 120 other trainee KGB officers would be inducted into the deepest secrets of Soviet spycraft: intelligence and counter-intelligence, recruiting and running spies, legals and illegals, agents and double agents, weapons, unarmed combat and surveillance, the arcane arts and language of this strange trade. Some of the most important instruction was in surveillance detection and evasion, known as 'dry-cleaning', or *proverka* in KGB jargon: how to spot when you were being followed, and dodge surveillance in a way that would appear accidental rather than intentional, since a target that is obviously 'surveillance aware' is likely to be a trained intelligence operative. 'The intelligence officer's behaviour shouldn't cause suspicion,' the KGB instructors declared. 'If a surveillance service notices that a foreigner is blatantly checking for a tail, it will be stimulated to work more secretly, more tenaciously, and with more ingenuity.'

Being able to make contact with an agent without being watched – or even while under surveillance – is central to every clandestine operation. In Western spy parlance, an officer or agent operating undetected is said to have gone 'black'. In test after test, the KGB students would be sent off to link up with a specific person at a precise location, drop off or pick up information, try to identify whether and how they were being followed, throw off the tail without appearing to do so, and arrive at the designated place spotlessly dry-cleaned. Surveillance was the responsibility of the KGB's Seventh Directorate. Professional watchers, highly trained in the art of tailing a suspect, would take part in the exercises, and at the end of each day the student-trainee and the surveillance team compared notes. *Proverka* was exhausting, competitive, time-consuming and nerve-shredding; Gordievsky found he was very good at it.

Oleg learned how to set up a 'signal site', a secret sign left in a public place – a chalk-mark on a lamppost for example – that meant nothing to a casual observer but would tell a spy to meet at a certain place and time; how to make a 'brush contact', physically passing a message or item to another person without being spotted; how to make a 'dead-letter drop', leaving a message or cash at a particular spot to be picked up by another without making direct contact. He was taught codes and ciphers, recognition signals, secret writing, preparation of microdots, photography and disguise. There were classes on economics and politics, as well as ideological tuition to reinforce the young spies' commitment to Marxism–Leninism. As one of Oleg's fellow students observed, 'these clichéd formulas and concepts had the character of ritual incantations, something akin to daily and hourly affirmations of loyalty'. Veteran officers, who had already served abroad, gave lectures on Western culture and etiquette to prepare recruits for understanding and combating bourgeois capitalism.

Gordievsky adopted his first spy-name. Soviet and Western intelligence services used the same method for choosing a pseudonym – it should be close to the real name, with the same initial letter, because that way if a person addressed you by your real name, someone who only knew you by your spy-name might well assume he or she had misheard. Gordievsky chose the name 'Guardiyetsev'.

Like every other student, he swore eternal loyalty to the KGB: 'I commit myself to defend my country to the last drop of blood, and to keep state secrets.' He did this without qualms. He also joined the Communist Party, another requirement of admission. He might have his doubts – many did – but that did not preclude him from joining the KGB and the Party with wholehearted commitment and sincerity. And, besides, the KGB was thrilling. So, far from being an Orwellian nightmare, the year-long training course at School 101 was the most enjoyable period of his young life, a time of excitement and anticipation. His fellow recruits were selected for their intelligence and ideological conformity, but also for the spirit of adventure common to all intelligence services. 'We had chosen careers in the KGB because they held out the prospect of action.' Secrecy forges

intense bonds. Even his parents had little idea where Oleg was, or what he was doing. 'To make it into service in the FCD was the concealed and open dream of the majority of young officers of state security, but only a few were made worthy of this honor,' wrote Leonid Shebarshin, who attended School 101 at around the same time as Oleg and would end up a KGB general. 'The . . . work united intelligence officers in a unique camaraderie with its own traditions, discipline, conventions, and special professional language.' By the summer of 1963, Gordievsky had been fully adopted into the KGB brotherhood. When he swore to defend the Motherland to his last breath and his last secret, he meant it.

Vasili Gordievsky was working hard for Directorate S, the illegals section of the FCD. He had also started to drink heavily – not necessarily a drawback in a service that prized the ability to consume vast amounts of vodka after work without falling over. An illegals specialist, he moved from place to place under different aliases, servicing the undercover network, passing on messages and money to other hidden agents. Vasili never told his younger brother what he was doing, but he hinted at exotic locations, including Mozambique, Vietnam, Sweden and South Africa.

Oleg hoped to follow his brother into this exhilarating undercover world overseas. Instead, he was told to report to Directorate S in Moscow, where he would be preparing documentation for other illegals. Trying to mask his disappointment, on 20 August 1963 Gordievsky climbed into his best suit and reported for work at KGB headquarters, the complex of buildings that stands near the Kremlin, part prison, part archive, the bustling nerve-centre of Soviet intelligence. At its heart stood the sinister Lubyanka, a neo-Baroque palace originally built for the All-Russia Insurance Company, whose basement housed the KGB torture cells. Among KGB officers, the KGB control centre was known as 'The Monastery' or, more simply, 'The Centre'.

Instead of going undercover in some glamorous foreign location, Gordievsky found himself shuffling paper, 'a galley slave' filling out forms. Each illegal required a fake persona, with a convincing backstory, a new identity with complete biography and forged paperwork. Each illegal had to be sustained, instructed and financed, requiring a complex arrangement of signal sites, dead drops and brush contacts.

Britain was seen as particularly fertile ground for planting illegals, since there was no system of identity cards in the country, and no central registration bureau. West Germany, America, Australia, Canada and New Zealand were all prime targets. Placed in the German section, Oleg spent his days creating people who did not exist. For two years, he lived in a world of double lives, sending counterfeit spies into the outer world, and meeting those who had returned.

The Centre was stalked by living ghosts, heroes of Soviet espionage in their dotage. In the corridors of Directorate S, Gordievsky was introduced to Konon Trofimovich Molody, alias 'Gordon Lonsdale', one of the most successful illegals in history. In 1943, the KGB had appropriated the identity of a dead Canadian child called Gordon Arnold Lonsdale, and given it to Molody, who had been raised in North America and spoke faultless English. Molody/Lonsdale settled in London in 1954 and, posing as a jovial salesman of jukeboxes and bubblegum machines, recruited the so-called Portland Spy Ring, a network of informants gathering naval secrets. (A KGB dentist had drilled several unnecessary holes in his teeth before he left Moscow, which meant Molody could simply open his mouth and point out the KGB-made cavities to confirm his identity to other Soviet spies.) A tip-off from a CIA mole had led to Molody's arrest and conviction for espionage, although even at his trial the British court was uncertain of his real name. When Gordievsky met him, Molody had just returned to Moscow after being swapped for a British businessman arrested on spying charges in Moscow. A similarly fabled figure was Vilyam Genrikhovich Fisher, alias Rudolf Abel, the illegal whose spying in the US had earned him a thirty-year sentence before he was exchanged for the downed U2 pilot Gary Powers in 1962.

But the most famous Soviet spy in semi-retirement was British. Kim Philby had been recruited by the NKVD in 1934, rose up the ranks of MI6 while feeding vast reams of intelligence to the KGB, and finally defected to the Soviet Union in January 1963, to the deep and abiding embarrassment of the British government. He now lived in a comfortable flat in Moscow, attended by minders, 'an Englishman to his fingertips', as one KGB officer put it, reading the cricket scores in old copies of *The Times*, eating Oxford marmalade and frequently

drinking himself into a stupor. Philby was revered as a legend within the KGB, and he continued to do odd jobs for Soviet intelligence, including running a training course for English-speaking officers, analysing occasional cases, and even helping to motivate the Soviet ice hockey team.

Like Molody and Fisher, Philby gave lectures to star-struck young spies. But the reality of life after KGB espionage was anything but happy. Molody took to drink and died in mysterious circumstances on a mushroom-picking expedition. Fisher became deeply disillusioned. Philby attempted to kill himself. All three would end up celebrated on Soviet postage stamps.

To anyone who cared to look closely (and few Russians did), the contrast between the myth and reality of the KGB was self-evident. The Centre was a spotlessly clean, brightly lit, amoral bureaucracy, a place at once ruthless, prissy and puritanical where international crimes were conceived with punctilious attention to detail. From its earliest days, Soviet intelligence operated without ethical restraint. In addition to collecting and analysing intelligence, the KGB organized political warfare, media manipulation, disinformation, forgery, intimidation, kidnapping and murder. The Thirteenth Department, or 'Directorate for Special Tasks', specialized in sabotage and assassination. Homosexuality was illegal in the USSR, but homosexuals were recruited to entrap gay foreigners, who could then be blackmailed. The KGB was unapologetically unprincipled. Yet it was a prudish, hypocritical and moralistic place. Officers were forbidden to drink during working hours, though many drank prodigiously at all other times. Gossip about the private lives of colleagues swirled around the KGB, as in most offices, with the difference that in the Centre scandal and tittle-tattle could destroy careers and end lives. The KGB took an intrusive interest in the domestic arrangements of its employees, for no life was private in the Soviet Union. Officers were expected to get married, have children, and stay married. There was calculation as well as control in this: a married KGB officer was considered less likely to defect while abroad, since his wife and family could be held as hostages.

Two years after joining Directorate S, Gordievsky concluded that

he was not going to follow in his brother's footsteps as a deep-cover spy posted abroad. But Vasili himself may have been the main reason Oleg was rejected for illegals work: according to KGB logic, having more than one family member abroad, and particularly having two in the same country, might be an inducement to defect.

Gordievsky was bored and frustrated. A job that had seemed to promise adventure and excitement had turned out to be humdrum in the extreme. The world beyond the Iron Curtain he had read about in Western newspapers seemed tantalizingly out of reach. So he decided to get married. 'I wanted to go abroad as soon as possible and the KGB never sent unmarried men abroad. I was in a hurry to find a wife.' A woman with German-language skills would be ideal, since they might then be posted to Germany together.

Yelena Akopian was training to be a German teacher. She was twenty-one, half Armenian, intelligent, dark-eyed and sharply witty. She was a mistress of the one-line put-down, which he found attractive and alluring, for a time. They met at the home of a mutual friend. What sparked between them had less to do with passion than a shared ambition. Like Oleg, Yelena longed to travel abroad, and imagined a life far beyond the confines of the cramped flat where she lived with her parents and five siblings. Gordievsky's few previous relationships had been brief and unsatisfying. Yelena seemed to offer a glimpse of what a modern Soviet woman might be, less conventional than the female students he had met before, with an unpredictable sense of humour. She pronounced herself a feminist, although in 1960s Russia the term was strictly limited. He told himself that he loved her. They got engaged, Gordievsky later reflected, 'without much real thought or self-examination on either side', and then married, without fanfare, a few months later, for reasons that were less than romantic: she would improve his chances of promotion, and he was her passport out of Moscow. This was a KGB marriage of convenience, though neither admitted it to the other.

Late in 1965 came the break Gordievsky had been waiting for. A slot opened up for a post running illegals in Denmark. His cover job would be that of a consular official dealing with visas and inheritances; in reality, he would be working for 'Line N' (standing for

nelegalniy, or illegals), responsible for the operational fieldwork of Directorate S.

Gordievsky was offered the job managing a network of undercover spies in Denmark. He accepted with alacrity and delight. As Kim Philby observed after he was recruited into the KGB in 1933: 'I did not hesitate. One does not look twice at an offer of enrolment in an elite force.'

2. Uncle Gormsson

Oleg and Yelena Gordievsky landed in Copenhagen on a glittering frosty day in January 1966, and entered a fairy tale.

As one MI6 officer later remarked: 'If you had to choose a city to demonstrate the advantages of Western democracy over Russian communism, you could hardly do better than Copenhagen.'

The capital of Denmark was beautiful, clean, modern, rich and, to the eyes of a couple newly emerged from the drab oppression of Soviet life, almost impossibly alluring. Here were sleek cars, shiny office buildings, smart designer furniture and smiling Nordic people with magnificent dentistry. There were teeming cafés, bright restaurants serving exotic food, shops selling a bewildering array of goods. To Gordievsky's famished eyes, the Danes seemed not just brighter and more alive, but culturally nourished. He was astounded by the range of books available in the first library he entered, but even more surprised to be allowed to borrow as many as he wanted, and keep the plastic bag he took them away in. There seemed to be very few policemen.

The Soviet embassy consisted of three stucco villas on Kristiania-gade in the northern part of the city, more like a grand gated hotel than a Soviet enclave, with immaculate sweeping gardens, a sports centre and a social club. The Gordievskys moved into a newly built apartment, with high ceilings, wooden floors and a fitted kitchen. He was allocated a Volkswagen Beetle, and a cash advance of £250 every month for entertaining contacts. Copenhagen seemed to be alive with music: Bach, Handel, Haydn, Telemann, composers he had never been allowed to hear in Soviet Russia. There was a very good reason, he reflected, why ordinary Soviet citizens were not permitted to travel abroad: who but a fully indoctrinated KGB officer would be able to taste such freedoms and resist the urge to stay?

Of the twenty officials in the Soviet embassy, just six were genuine