

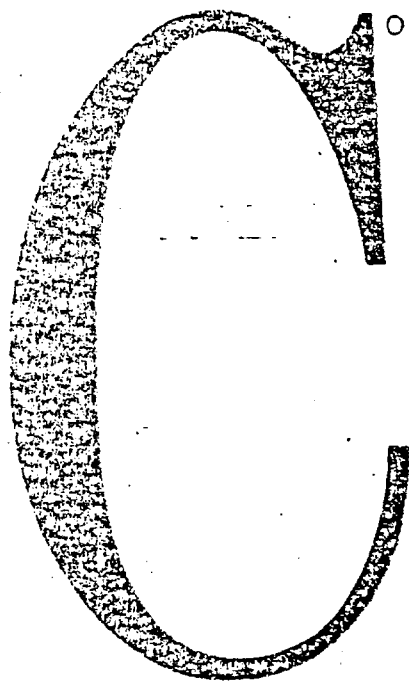
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When The CIA Was Almost Wrecked

EDITOR'S NOTE: For this article, the author extensively interviewed most of those counterintelligence officers in the secret services of the United States, Great Britain and France who had worked on the Anatolij Golitsyn case from 1961 to 1974.

By Edward Jay Epstein



COULD THE WEST HAVE DEALT differently with one man's overwhelming supply of information? Was it duped by Soviet "disinformation"? Or was it a victim of its own paranoia—perhaps the most contagious and corrosive of human diseases?

Anatolij Golitsyn defected from the KGB—the Soviet secret service—in exchange for asylum in the U.S. He told CIA officials he wanted to explain how the KGB really operates. He spoke of "moles"—Soviet double agents—in top positions of secret service organizations in the West. He predicted (accurately) moves the KGB would make. And he said the Soviets had a new strategy—to conquer the West without struggle.

Their reactions to Golitsyn's disclosures left the secret services of three Western nations in a shambles. Divided by distrust, they nearly fell. There were probes, resignations, firings, defections, imprisonment and even a death.

It all began when Golitsyn appeared at the American Embassy in Helsinki, Finland, in the midst of a snowstorm on Dec. 22, 1961. Short, powerfully built, in his mid-30s, speaking English with a heavy Russian accent, Golitsyn asked to see Frank Friberg, the CIA station chief.

He identified himself as a major in the KGB, assigned to the Soviet Embassy in Helsinki with the job of vice consul as his cover. While stationed at KGB headquarters in Moscow, he had learned all about the Soviet espionage apparatus in both the U.S. and Europe, he said, adding that he had documents from KGB archives. He offered all this to the CIA in return for safe passage to the United States for himself and his wife and daughter, who were spending Christmas with him in Finland.

In Washington, a search of the CIA's central records came up with only a single trace of Golitsyn. Seven years earlier, he had been listed by another KGB defector as potentially disloyal. For Richard M. Helms, then the CIA chief of operations, taking in Golitsyn was a calculated gamble, but finally Helms gave the "Go" signal.

After several weeks of around-the-clock interrogation at an Army base outside Frankfurt, during which he filled in biographical sketches on hundreds of KGB officers in Moscow and abroad,

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