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REVIEW & OUTLOOK

Andropov's P.R.

Vladimir Kuzichkin has been described as the highest ranking KGB defector in 10 years. In a recent Time magazine, he gives a lurid "inside account" of the Soviet coup in Afghanistan. We didn't have any particular doubts before, but after checking his account with Afghanistan specialists, the only thing clear to us about him is that he's a great mystery.

His Time interview claims that the KGB opposed the armed Russian invasion of Afghanistan, but that Brezhnev and the Politburo ordered it anyway. How curious that this tidbit should emerge just when Yuri Andropov, until recently head of the KGB, has become the top man in the Kremlin.

Other half-truths and omissions in the Time account trouble Westerners familiar with Afghan events. Kuzichkin, described as an undercover operative in Iran for five years, seems unfamiliar with the major Afghan players. His basic theme, that Afghanistan was a blunder, follows the off-the-record line that Soviet diplomats are dropping at cocktail parties around the world. He ignores the Russian military buildup in southern Afghanistan, within striking range of the Persian Gulf. To put it bluntly, warning bells are ringing that we might be facing a

classic Soviet case of disinformation.

The past history of defectors should be warning enough that they come from murky waters. A bitter controversy continues to this day over Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko, allegedly a KGB lieutenant colonel who came to the West in 1964 saying that he had been Lee Harvey Oswald's case officer. His message was that the KGB had had no interest in Oswald when the man who later shot President Kennedy had been a defector living in Russia. So many parts of his story failed to jibe that CIA officers concluded he was a plant. But after three years of questioning in "hostile" conditions, they failed to break him. A new regime ended a messy situation by rehabilitating Nosenko, and at last report the agency was paying him \$35,000 a year to lecture in its counterintelligence courses. But doubts about his story have never been resolved.

Intelligence spooks live in such a duplicitous world that one could go mad trying to get at the truth. One noted participant once called it a "wilderness of mirrors." When those of us on the outside start hearing spectacular revelations, especially those that advance certain interests in the Kremlin, we should reach for a large shaker of salt.