

Espionage**Spy Reported in Soviet Hands
Was a Top Agent, U.S. Says**By **MICHAEL WINES**

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 15 — Donald F., the senior Soviet diplomat whose 30-year career as a spy for the United States was disclosed in the Soviet press on Sunday, was one of the most important recruits to serve American intelligence, current and former Government officials said today.

Several former officials said the account of the diplomat's early years, as reported in Pravda, the Communist Party daily, matched the career of a spy trained and supervised by the F.B.I. in the early 1960's. That spy's code name was Top Hat.

Top Hat, an agent for the Soviet military intelligence agency G.R.U., was stationed at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations in New York City when he reportedly approached American officials in 1961 or 1962, offering his services as a double agent.

His work apparently continued for the next three decades, despite a debate among United States intelligence officials over whether he was a genuine double agent serving Washington, or a "dangle," a supposed double agent who was actually working for the Soviets.

An Era of Uncertainty

In the late 1960's, American intelligence agencies were convulsed over whether the Soviet spies recruited by the United States could be trusted.

James J. Angleton, the C.I.A.'s chief of counterintelligence at the time, came to suspect that many of the agents, including Top Hat, were actually controlled by the Soviet Union and were providing deceptive information.

Others in the C.I.A. and F.B.I. disagreed, arguing that Top Hat was a legitimate agent who had risked his life to provide valuable intelligence to the United States.

One Government official underlined that view today, saying: "The Soviets apparently thought he was genuine. They executed him, didn't they?" The Pravda report stated that Donald F. had been tried and found guilty of espionage and was to be executed. It is not clear whether the sentence has been carried out.

In recent years, the debate over Top Hat broke into public view, with several books and articles describing the recruitment of an agent from among the Soviet diplomats assigned to the United Nations.

Pravda's report on the unmasking of Donald F. by the Soviet counterintelligence said a published report in the West had hinted at his identity. Donald F., Pravda said, decided to continue his espionage, believing that he was safe from detection.

"I felt in my spine that the K.G.B.

was after me but my own analysis of my actions erased my concerns," Pravda quoted him as telling Soviet investigators.

In a twist to the tale, a former Government intelligence official said today that the top Soviet intelligence officer at the United Nations Mission in the early 1960's, when Top Hat began his double life, was Vladimir A. Kryuchkov, who in 1988 was appointed chairman of the K.G.B., the primary Soviet foreign intelligence agency.

A Posting in Burma

A former official said Top Hat was a military attaché in the United Nations, holding relatively junior rank. Another official said he was recruited by the F.B.I. in New York while serving at the United Nations. That official said that after his assignment at the United Nations, Top Hat was recalled to Moscow.

His next posting, two former intelli-

**Double agent?
Triple agent? Or
in it for himself?**

gence officials said, was in Burma, now Myanmar. One official said that in 1965 or 1966, an agent from the F.B.I. traveled to that country to turn him over to a case officer from the C.I.A. By law, the F.B.I. handles intelligence recruitments in the United States while the C.I.A. operates overseas.

Pravda said Donald F. was recruited at the United Nations and was then contacted in Burma by an F.B.I. agent, who arranged for him to be handled by the C.I.A. Three former intelligence officials said they knew of no other Soviet agents recruited at the United Nations and then contacted in Burma.

The Pravda report appears to have thrown new fuel into a debate over Top Hat's authenticity, a dispute that has continued almost since the day he volunteered his services to the United States.

By some accounts, Top Hat was one of two Soviet agents at the United Nations who approached the American Government in the early 1960's, offering to give Soviet secrets to the F.B.I.

The first volunteer, code-named Fedora, continued his F.B.I. service for at least 15 years, according to published accounts, even though the C.I.A.'s counterintelligence experts concluded that he was in fact a Soviet plant.

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