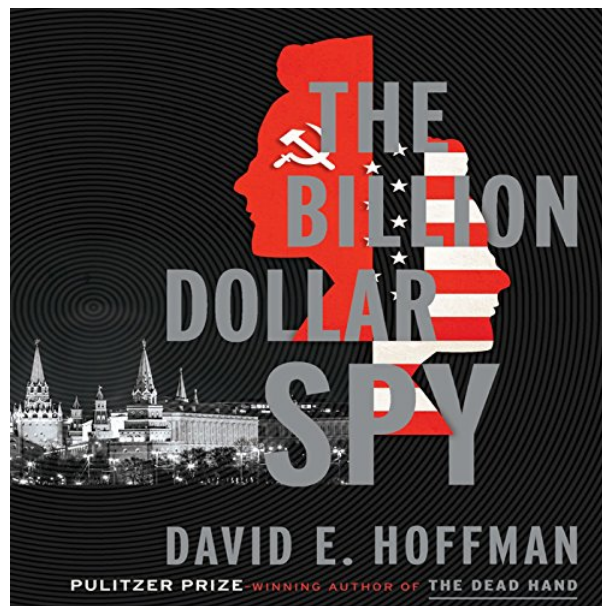
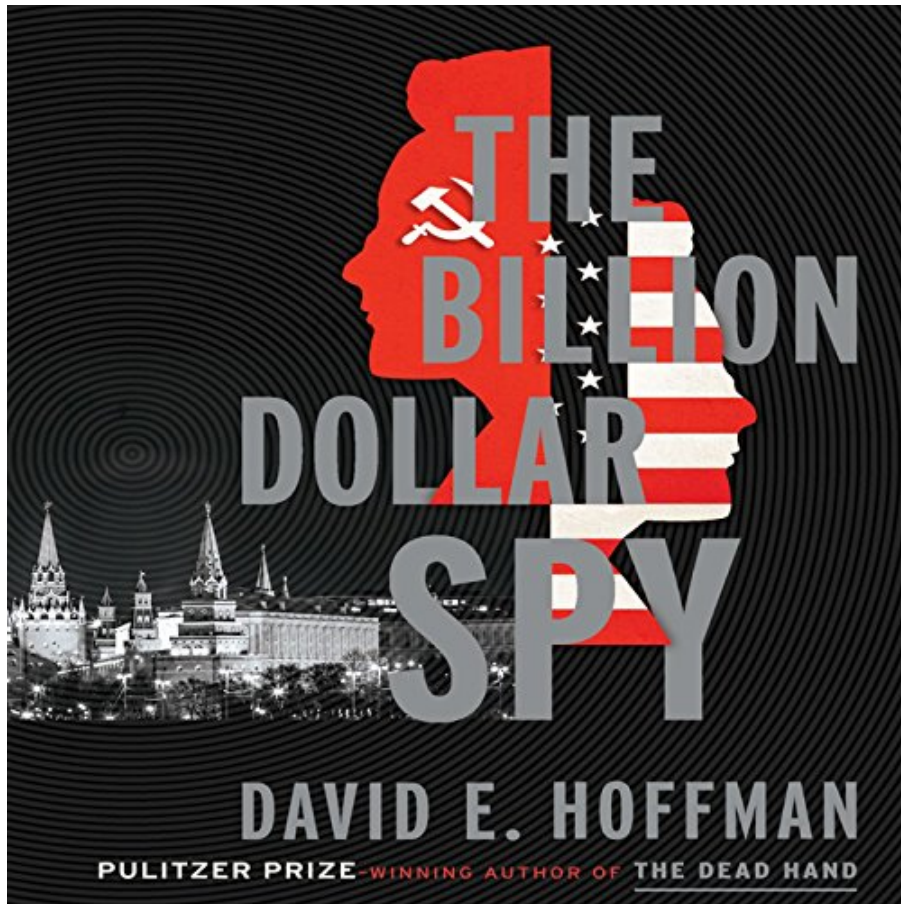


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# **THE BILLION DOLLAR SPY: A TRUE STORY OF COLD WAR ESPIONAGE AND BETRAYAL BY DAVID E. HOFFMAN PDF**

From the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Dead Hand* comes the riveting story of the CIA's most valuable spy in the Soviet Union and an evocative portrait of the agency's Moscow station, an outpost of daring espionage in the last years of the Cold War.

While getting into his car on the evening of February 16, 1978, the chief of the CIA's Moscow station was handed an envelope by an unknown Russian. Its contents stunned the Americans: details of top-secret Soviet research and development in military technology that was totally unknown to the United States.

From 1979 to 1985, Adolf Tolkachev, an engineer at a military research center, cracked open the secret Soviet military research establishment, using his access to hand over tens of thousands of pages of material about the latest advances in aviation technology, alerting the Americans to possible developments years in the future. He was one of the most productive and valuable spies ever to work for the United States in the four decades of global confrontation with the Soviet Union. Tolkachev took enormous personal risks, but so did his CIA handlers. Moscow station was a dangerous posting to the KGB's backyard. The CIA had long struggled to recruit and run agents in Moscow, and Tolkachev became a singular breakthrough. With hidden cameras and secret codes, and in face-to-face meetings with CIA case officers in parks and on street corners, Tolkachev and the CIA worked to elude the feared KGB.

Drawing on previously secret documents obtained from the CIA, as well as interviews with participants, Hoffman reveals how the depredations of the Soviet state motivated one man to master the craft of spying against his own nation until he was betrayed to the KGB by a disgruntled former CIA trainee. No one has ever told this story before in such detail, and Hoffman's deep knowledge of spycraft, the Cold War, and military technology makes him uniquely qualified to bring listeners this real-life espionage thriller.

- Sales Rank: #4044 in Audible
- Published on: 2015-07-07
- Released on: 2015-07-07
- Format: Unabridged
- Original language: English
- Running time: 714 minutes

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John Le Carre got it wrong

By Mal Warwick

If you think you have a strong sense of how espionage was conducted during the Cold War, you're probably wrong. Histories, and the crowded shelves of spy novels set during the era, offer a cursory and misleading view of the day-to-day reality as it was lived by the men and women who worked for the CIA and the KGB.

David E. Hoffman's outstanding tale about one extraordinary Russian spy for the US and his CIA handlers is truly eye-opening. You won't be able to look at spycraft in what is called humint — human intelligence — the same way ever again.

The Billion Dollar Spy was a Soviet engineer named Adolf Tokachev who provided the US with a prodigious volume of technical data about the USSR's military capabilities from 1977 to 1985. He served as chief engineer of one of several research and development institutes serving the Soviet air force. Under the noses of his bosses and the KGB alike, he brazenly supplied photographs of many thousands of pages of top-secret data to the CIA, enabling the US to counteract every technical advantage achieved by the USSR in its most advanced combat aircraft. An assessment by the US government of Tokachev's "production" placed the value at two billion dollars, and that was undoubtedly a conservative estimate. There seems to be little question that Adolf Tokachev was the CIA's biggest success story ever in human intelligence — at least among those the agency has revealed to researchers. His portrait hangs in CIA headquarters to this day.

Hoffman tells this amazing story with great skill and in minute detail. The book reads like a top-flight spy novel, reeking of suspense. But what is most surprising (at least to me) is the insiders' picture of CIA operations. To call the agency bureaucratic would be a gross understatement: every single action taken by Tokachev's handlers and every single word they communicated to him was first painstakingly reviewed not just by the head of the Moscow station but also by his boss, the head of the agency's Soviet division — and often by the Director of the CIA himself. More often than not, the agency big-wigs second-guessed their field staff, denying multiple requests for money to compensate Tokachev, for the cyanide pill he demanded in case he was discovered by the KGB, and for the spyware he needed to photograph top-secret material he had spirited away from his office at the risk of his life. Yet, as Hoffman writes, "Tokachev's material was so valuable back at Langley that he was literally 'paying the rent' — justifying the CIA's operational budget — and helping the agency satisfy the military customers."

That bureaucratic meddling was the first surprise. The second was the picture of tedium and frustration suffered by Tokachev's handlers. Pulling off a single exchange of material at a dead drop might require weeks, with the effort aborted several times for fear of KGB surveillance. Face-to-face meetings with the engineer were often even more fraught with fear. Months went by between meetings, sometimes by design, sometimes by misadventure. On a couple of occasions, Tokachev's wife inadvertently opened the attic window he used to signal for a meeting, creating confusion and anxiety within the CIA station. And the technology designed by the agency's answer to James Bond's "Q" sometimes malfunctioned.

Third, though by no means a surprise, is the picture Hoffman paints of the damage suffered by the CIA at the hands of its long-time director of counterintelligence, James Jesus Angleton. When his close personal friend, Kim Philby, defected to the Soviet Union after decades of extraordinarily high-level spying, Angleton apparently went off the deep end into paranoia. (Many of his coworkers thought he was nuts.) As Hoffman writes, "Angleton's suspicions permeated the culture and fabric of the CIA's Soviet operations division during the 1960s, with disastrous results . . . If no one could be trusted, there could be no spies." Hoffman adds that, for Angleton, "everything was labeled suspicious or compromised . . ."

It's not a stretch to imagine that the CIA opened up its records on the Tokachev affair as a public relations move to counter all the dreadful publicity it has suffered over the past decade and more. After all, such records are normally classified for fifty years, and Tokachev's career for the CIA ended only thirty years ago.

It's also sobering to consider the agency's success with Tokachev in a larger context. As Marc Goodman revealed in his recent book, *Future Crimes*, Chinese government hackers succeeded in stealing top-secret US

military data worth hundreds of billions of dollars.

David E. Hoffman is a Pulitzer-Prize-winning contributing editor to the Washington Post.

11 of 11 people found the following review helpful.

An outstanding and tightly written account

By F. Carol Sabin

„The billion dollar spy” is the true story of an electronics engineer at a secret military aviation institute in Moscow who for almost seven years provided the CIA with a huge volume of sensitive and valuable intelligence on Soviet research and development (R%D) activities concerning radars, avionics, AA missiles, and other technologies.

At the beginning, I hesitated in buying this book, since I read Barry Royden’s internal monograph (good, but objectively less detailed) on the operation issued in 2003, but in the end I decided to purchase the book hoping to find some missing aspects of the aforementioned account. I didn’t regret since the volume is laced with startling revelations - about double agents, human dimensions and problems, covert operations, human and technical operational capabilities, spying techniques and betrayals.

For the first time, we get an in-depth story about the Adolf Tolchacev (codename CK Sphere, later GT Vanquish) operation, one of the CIA’s most productive agents, who driven by anger and vengeance, provided United States with intelligence it had never obtained. What makes this operation more audacious was the fact that all 21 personally meetings between him and his six case officers (last three of them “deep cover” officers) happened in a surveillance-heavy environment of the omnipotent KGB.

The book is fast-paced and starts in the “Prologue” part with such a meeting which took part in December 1982, introducing - apart the case officer W. Plunkert – a CIA device, simply called Jack-in-the-box (JIB), designed to escape from KGB surveillance. Throughout the book’s 21 chapters the author uncovers several espionage techniques to “move through the gap”, that is, avoid blanket surveillance, and allow CIA to carry out its life-and-death meetings with its valuable source:, identity transfer/deception and street disguise, out-of-country scenarios, JIB or surveillance detection runs. Among electronic devices the book reveals Discus, Buster SRAC device, IOWL or Iskra. Cameras, such as Tropel T50/100, a wonder of optical engineering, or Pentax ME 35mm and Molly are also presented.

Next to Tolchachev’s profile, stand those of his handlers, no doubt, CIA’s crème de la crème: J. Guilsher, D. Rolph, W. Plunkert or “deep cover officers” such R. Morris and P. Stombaugh. (and John Yeagley, not mentioned in the book). Their dedication and sacrifice were amply described in the book; for their huge contribution, perhaps they should be called “billion dollar case officers”. Their patience, quick decisions and attitude help enormously to run this operation. In the opposite corner, in my opinion, stand DCI S. Turner “strange” decisions not to pursue Tolchachev initiative, almost close not to have such a crown jewel of human source.

No doubt, Tolchachev was a complex and delicate man to handle with many switches or problems; the author presented the long debates about his money demands, suicide-pill request, exfiltration plans or the difficult moments of that risky relationship.

In addition, there is a good presentation of the Moscow CsOS namely R. M. Fulton, G. Hathaway, B. Gerber or C. E. Gerbhardt; oddly, there is not a single paragraph about Murat Natirboff, who held this position from 1984 to 09.1986.

Mr. Hoffman dedicated a good portion of the book for presenting the Cold War context or previous cases or

other operations. It is a sound idea: the readers can find compelling details about Penkovsky, Popov, Golitsin, Ogorodnik or Sheymov cases among others.

Moreover, the author also addresses to a technical operations conducted in that period - CK Elbow wiretap (later GT/Taw, I guessed); sadly, there were no details about GT Absorb, in my opinion, an equally interesting operation.

Finally, in chapter 16 ("Seeds of betrayal"), the author takes the readers inside the motives, frustrations and problems of E. Howard in revealing Tolkachev's identity to the Soviets. He betrayed not only this source, but also a variety of CIA tradecraft procedures and capabilities: CK Elbow, JIB or his "deep cover" colleagues' identities. CIA also made a huge mistake in protecting their source by losing three pages from a top-secret Tolkachev document, a fact revealed on page 238.

The formidable impact of Tolkachev intelligence is summarized in "Note on the intelligence" section: he delivered design and capabilities of radars deployed on MIG-23/29 fighters and MIG-25/31 interceptors, plus SU-27 multirole fighter and IL-76 AWACS. No wonder, after 1985 the Soviets started a long process to modify their radars and avionics, developing a long series of updates for MIG-29/31 or SU-27. Moreover, he compromised the technical deficiencies of the Soviet SAM radars to intercept penetrators at low altitudes (B-1 B bomber or cruise missiles). Never before a U.S. intel source opened such a window on Soviet intentions and capabilities. As the author stated, his intelligence produced a major impact on the training of US pilots and ensured that US would enjoy almost total air superiority over Soviet-built fighters for more than two decades.

The book is filled with 30+ B&W photos, showing, mainly, A. Tolkachev and some case officers.

In the conclusion part -"Epilogue"- the author analyses the application of the Tolchacev vast intelligence in a short aerial combat episode during Operation Desert Storm.

The study concludes with a very useful four-page "Note on the intelligence", complemented by „Acknowledgements”, an extensive „Notes” section (32 pages) and the usual index.

Energetically written and lucid, it makes an ideal lecture for all Cold War enthusiasts, buffs and pros alike. Highly recommended!

5 of 5 people found the following review helpful.

Original Research

By Hamilton Beck

Spoiler Alert – this review, like all my reviews – presumes you have already read the book!

Original research makes "The Billion Dollar Spy" much more than just a rehash of the known facts of a decades-old case. Former Washington Post investigative reporter David E. Hoffman has unearthed a trove of documents and interviewed dozens of sources. The result is an authentic contribution to our knowledge of Cold War history. While he might not have spoken the last word, this outstanding book is likely to be as close as any Western journalist is able to come for the foreseeable future. One wonders if it has been optioned for a movie, perhaps something along the lines of Billy Ray's "Breach."

One problem with a film version is that the story of Adolf Tolkachev, of course, lacks a Hollywood happy ending. From early on, Washington wrestled with the dilemma that, although we knew this Soviet scientist was putting his life in danger, his information was so valuable that we were reluctant to exfiltrate him. The Agency was the addict, and he was for a time virtually the only supplier. To be fair, ultimately it was Tolkachev himself who insisted on continuing his work, thus placing both himself and his unwitting family at risk. Still, we never put our foot down.



When it comes to how the case was handled, Hoffman's bias – understandable, in light of the evidence he presents – is in favor of the locals, the hands-on operatives stationed in Moscow, and against their superiors in DC, who often come off as out of touch with the reality on the ground. Looking at the degree of incompetence they displayed, it is hard to dispute this assessment. For instance, when Soviet sources started to disappear, Washington reflexively reacted by suspecting the Marines and low-level Russian help in the US embassy, launching an extended and mostly fruitless witch-hunt.

Though some leaks were found (remember Clayton Lonetree?), only belatedly did the real traitors come to light. Without exception, they turned out to be red-blooded Americans in the homeland, including Aldrich Ames and the deeply religious Bob Hansson. It seems, though, that the first to betray Tolkachev was Edward Lee Howard. Portrayed here as a loser – utterly devoid of any motive beyond anger, spite and greed – Howard should never have been recruited at all, but the Agency failed to figure this out until the eve of his deployment, having already put him through rigorous training. Only at the last minute, when he failed one lie detector test after another, did they unceremoniously cut him loose and cast him back into civilian life, without bothering to provide effective counseling or later checking up on him regularly. Tolkachev betrayed his country because it had unjustly imprisoned and executed close family relatives; Howard because he felt disrespected.

Hoffman asserts that Tolkachev was the victim of "betrayal from within [the CIA]." (pg. 218) While this is correct as far as it goes, based on his own evidence there is plenty of blame to go around. Take the FBI. On the one hand, he argues that if the bureau's surveillance of Howard had been minimally competent, he would never have gotten out of Albuquerque. The rookie agent the FBI assigned to watch him was, according to their own internal review, "less than adequate," a bureaucratic euphemism for "totally incompetent." On the other hand, Hoffman also implies – somewhat inconsistently – that the CIA had trained Howard so well that the FBI was simply no match for him.

To provide background on Tolkachev's family, Hoffman draws on both unpublished archival material and personal contacts in Russia, though to a far lesser extent than in the chapters that focus on America. His – or more likely the Agency's – translations into English come across as correct if occasionally stilted: "I consider that I have the normal attachment to the family that exists in mankind." The index is frequently inaccurate when it comes to names mentioned in the footnotes.

Readers have compared "The Million Dollar Spy" to John le Carré's novels, and there may be something to this beyond just atmospherics. Personally, I find intriguing similarities between Tolkachev and Goethe, the scientist who passed on valuable information in le Carré's "The Russia House." If Goethe's message was, "Our stuff doesn't work," Tolkachev's was, "We are years behind; Soviet air defense systems are weak." Similarly on the issue of how to respond to the US cruise missile threat: "We have just started to study the problem." Assuming for the moment le Carré did base his hero in part on Tolkachev, it comes as little surprise that he dropped the character's first name, discarding the unfortunate "Adolf" in favor of the much better – but still German – cover name "Goethe." One major difference, of course, is that Tolkachev spied for the US, whereas le Carré's hero contacts the British.

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