

# KGB TODAY

THE HIDDEN HAND



**BY JOHN BARRON**

*Author of KGB: The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents*

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**THE HIDDEN HAND**

*Books by John Barron*

**KGB: THE SECRET WORK OF  
SOVIET SECRET AGENTS**

**MURDER OF A GENTLE LAND**  
*(With Anthony Paul)*

**MI6 PILOT  
THE FINAL ESCAPE OF  
LIEUTENANT BELENKO**

**KGB TODAY:  
THE HIDDEN HAND**

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## **THE HIDDEN HAND**



**JOHN BARRON**



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# Author's Preface

ANYONE WHO WRITES ABOUT secret subjects and asks to be taken seriously is obligated to explain the origin, methods and purpose of his or her work, and above all to cite sources.

This book had its beginnings on a gloomy, rainy evening in November 1979, when Major Stanislav Aleksandrovich Levchenko came to my home. Not many days before, Levchenko had escaped to the United States from Tokyo where for nearly five years he had been at the core of great KGB operations.\* He was still experiencing the traumas of flight, of the loss of his family, of permanent severance from his culture, and of entry into an alien society he had been taught to despise.

Yet, from the outset, Levchenko behaved as an officer and gentleman, a Russian patriot, who, though he had come to hate the KGB and the Soviet system, still revered his native Russia

\*The letters KGB stand for the Russian words *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti*, which mean Committee for State Security. The KGB is an apparatus that functions as a secret political police force within the Soviet Union, and abroad as an instrument of clandestine action. Founded December 20, 1917, as the Cheka, the apparatus has undergone numerous titular changes, being known successively as the GPU, OGPU, GUGB, NKVD, NKGB, MGB and, since March 13, 1954, the KGB. Always it has been the "Sword and Shield of the Party"—the shield which protects the Soviet Communist Party oligarchy, the sword by which the oligarchy attempts to impose its will within and without the Soviet Union.



and his countrymen. I liked him instantly. We talked by the fire and listened to recorded music, most of it unfamiliar to him. He asked that some melodies be played again and again—"Plaisir d'Amour," "Parlez Moi d'Amour," "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," "The Battle Hymn of the Republic."

Levchenko had asked to see me because he had read an earlier book I wrote about the KGB. Around 2 a.m. he picked the book from the shelf and called my attention to a passage that reproduces a letter written from a Soviet mental institution by a young college instructor, V. I. Chernyshov. It says:

"Having been buried, it is hard to prove that you're alive—except perhaps if a miracle should happen and someone dug up your grave before you died for good. It is hard to prove one's soundness of mind from within the walls of a psychiatric hospital.

"I finished the mechanics-mathematics course at LSU (Leningrad State University), then worked as an instructor of math with the title of assistant in the Leningrad branch of the Moscow Institute. I got carried away with collecting books and records, wrote poems for myself, short stories and philosophical essays. I typed up all my writings and bound them in three notebooks: poems and aphorisms, short stories and abstract dissertations, philosophical essays and statements of my ideas, of an anti-communist nature. During my five years of writing philosophical studies, I gave them to only two people. In March 1970 I was arrested for 'anti-Soviet propaganda.' One of the readers of my writings repented at once and was given his freedom. The other, a graduate of the Art Academy, V. Popov, whose guilt was in having drawn a bookplate in my notebook, was arrested.

"In prison I was examined for 30 minutes, and a diagnosis was reached: chronic schizophrenia of a paranoid type. I didn't see a lawyer, was not present at the trial and wasn't even told of the diagnosis or about the trial for a month and a half. My wife told me about it during a visit after the trial. The same diagnosis was reached for Popov. . . .

"In America Angela Davis was arrested. The whole world up to now knows about her fate, she has lawyers, people protest in her favor. But I, I have no rights, not once did I meet a lawyer, I

wasn't present at the trial, I have no right to complain, I have no right to go on a hunger strike. I myself have seen how in psychiatric hospitals they tie protesting political prisoners, who refuse to take food or 'medicine,' give them a shot after which they cannot move, and forcibly feed and 'treat' them. A man called V. Borisov has protested for the past two years—they treat him with aminazin, which results in a loss of individuality, his intellect gets blunt, his emotions are destroyed and his memory disappears. This is the death of creativity: those given aminazin cannot even read afterward.

"Even though I am afraid of death, let them rather shoot me. How vile, how repulsive is the thought that they will defile, crush my soul! I appeal to believers. N.I. Broslavsky, a Christian, has languished here for over 25 years. And Timonin, whose guilt consists solely of having poured ink in a voting urn. They jeer at Timonin's religious feelings, they demand that he repudiate his faith, otherwise they won't let him out. Christians! Your brothers in Christ are suffering. Stand up for their souls! Christians! . . .

"I am afraid of death, but I'll accept it. I'm terribly afraid of torture. But there is a worse torture, and it awaits me—the introduction of chemicals into my mind. The vivisectors of the twentieth century will not hesitate to seize my soul; maybe I will remain alive, but after this I won't be able to write even one poem. I won't be able to think. I have already been informed of the decision for my 'treatment.' Farewell."

Levchenko said, "You see, I am a Christian." He also confided that his mother was Jewish, a fact he had always hidden from the KGB and everyone else.

Although he had been a secret Christian for 15 years, Levchenko was not a pacifist. He wanted to combat the KGB by revealing to the world his life within the KGB. He asked for no money, or anything else for himself; only that his story be narrated accurately.

Beginning in April 1980, Levchenko and I spent three weeks on the island of Maui, reconstructing his entire life; and we talked often during the next two years. These interviews form the basis of Chapters II, III and IV.

Levchenko contributed much more than his own story. He had worked at KGB headquarters in Moscow, and in Soviet fronts endeavoring to manipulate peace movements around the world. So he knew which types of espionage the Soviets currently emphasize, the clues that distinguish a KGB officer from a bona fide diplomat, and the signs that betray Soviet inroads into legitimate organizations. Enlightened by his briefings, I and my associates investigated, mainly through overt sources, KGB theft of advanced technology and efforts to influence peace groups. These investigations yielded most of the data for Chapters V and VI.

In March 1980 the FBI disclosed the defection of Colonel Rudolf Herrmann, who had served as an illegal KGB agent in North America for 17 years. I wrote to Herrmann through the FBI, and in November 1980, at Williamsburg, Virginia, he shared with me the full story of his life. Chapters VII and VIII recount that story.

One of the most important confederates of Colonel Herrmann was Professor Hugh George Hambleton, a Canadian economist who served as a KGB agent for 23 years. Having learned much about him from Herrmann, I approached him, and he consented to interviews, which were conducted in Quebec during December 1980. Chapter IX tells his story.

*Reader's Digest*, in its October 1982 issue, published a condensation of Chapter VI, concerning the nuclear-freeze movement. The condensation attracted abnormal attention and caused some controversy after President Ronald Reagan cited it as one basis for his judgment that the Soviets are trying to influence the movement. Subsequently, various Soviet spokesmen vitriolically condemned the condensation. However, to my knowledge, no one has adduced the least evidence demonstrating that there is a single error of fact in what *The Digest* published.

That is so because of the extraordinarily exhaustive and skillful research of *Digest* Associate Editor G. William Gunn and Research Associate David Pacholczyk. For almost a year, they labored six and seven days a week verifying facts, read-

ing obscure literature and dreary communist polemics, and interviewing diverse people, some of whom have been hostile. They made many original discoveries. On a sweltering Sunday afternoon, for example, Bill Gunn came into my office with an old issue of the Communist *Daily World* and said, "I may have found something." A story on an inside page reported that one Radomir Bogdanov had spoken on Capitol Hill to members of Congress. From past research, I knew Radomir Bogdanov to be a veteran KGB colonel. This was our first evidence of KGB involvement with U.S. Congressmen in support of the nuclear-freeze movement.

The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence in December 1982 released the record of hearings it conducted regarding Soviet Active Measures. Along with testimony heard, the published record contains exhibits comprised of studies or documents submitted by the CIA and the FBI. Making a final check of a few points, David Pacholczyk studied this Exhibit XI in my office late at night. Suddenly, he exclaimed, "My God! They've doctored the document!" In preparing Exhibit XI, the House committee artfully deleted significant sections of an original document. The portions excised revealed names of Congressmen who had joined Soviet agents in meetings at the Capitol advocating disarmament. (Some of the data this Congressional committee curiously withheld from the public is reproduced at the end of Chapter VI.)

Gunn and Pacholczyk, with help from *Digest* researchers Nancy Tafoya and Katharine Clark, compiled the extensive Chapter Notes that detail the sources of information and enable readers to assess the factual validity of the book's content. In so doing, they detected and saved me from a number of errors.

I am indebted to others. Specialists in Soviet, East European and Japanese studies at the Library of Congress generously have shared their expertise and pointed out much source data. Konstantin Simis, a former Soviet lawyer, granted me permission to quote from his important new book, *U.S.S.R.: The Corrupt Society*. J. Fred Bucy, president of Texas Instruments

in Dallas, instructed me at length about technological subjects and pointed us to significant findings about KGB activities in the United States. John L. Martin, chief of the Internal Security Section, Criminal Division, Department of Justice, provided invaluable guidance and criticism.

*Digest* Editor-in-Chief Edward T. Thompson authorized this project, put the magazine's resources at my disposal, granted me all the time needed and complete liberty to proceed as I judged best. Executive Editor Kenneth Gilmore and Washington Editor William Schulz enhanced the manuscript with ideas and editing. Their counsel and support sustained me throughout the research and writing. Patricia McLamara patiently and expertly typed the numerous drafts of the manuscript and protected me from many distractions.

I gratefully acknowledge the help of others, in America and abroad, whom I am not at liberty to identify. All share the credo Winston S. Churchill expressed when he declared: "We fight not for glory, not for riches, not for honor; we fight only and alone for *freedom*, which no good man surrenders, save with his life."

It is impossible to understand the Soviet Union without understanding the KGB and its transcendent role in Soviet policy and society. I hope this book may in some measure contribute to such understanding. For understanding is the first requisite to remaining free of all that is symbolized by the KGB.

John Barron  
Washington, D.C.  
March 5, 1983

# I A TYRANNY IN TROUBLE

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THE RUSSIAN, a tall, dignified man in his 60s, entered the Moscow apartment about 6 p.m., followed by three aides who kept a respectful distance. His thick, gray hair was brushed straight back above an ashen face that expressed deep fatigue. Behind rimless glasses, his hazel eyes seemed thoughtful and searching, but they too bespoke weariness.

Without introducing himself or being introduced, he said in halting, formal English, "Professor Hambleton, I am pleased to welcome you to Moscow. I hope you have found the arrangements here satisfactory and your work productive."

Professor Hambleton was Hugh George Hambleton of Laval University, in Quebec, Canada. A handsome, debonair economist of some note, Hambleton had been a KGB agent for nearly 20 years, during which he had slipped the Soviets more than 1200 classified NATO documents. More significantly, he had supplied the KGB with its first authentic intelligence

disclosing that both Israel and South Africa were producing nuclear weapons. Now the KGB hoped that he could enmesh himself in some secret research center in the United States.

A KGB housekeeper had set out a cold supper, along with carafes of wine, on a dining table, and the Russian invited Hambleton to be seated. While one aide stood behind to assist him with his English, the other two braced themselves against the wall, and Hambleton realized they were bodyguards.

As they dined, the Russian posed a series of questions: Is not military spending becoming too onerous for the United States? Are Jews persecuted in America? What is the attitude of American youths toward the Soviet Union? Will not the European Common Market eventually fail? When the conversation turned to China, he remarked sadly, "Our relations with them are a tragedy."

After surveying the world, the Russian discussed future KGB assignments with Hambleton, including one in the United States. "In any case," the Russian concluded, "it is clear we can continue to use you in denied areas, like Israel, in trouble spots all over the world."

Almost exactly an hour after his arrival, the visitor rose from the table, and Hambleton stood also. Shaking hands, the Russian said, "I hope our collaboration will be even more fruitful in the future, and I wish you personally health and good fortune."

As soon as the visitor left, the KGB officer staying with Hambleton in the apartment filled two glasses with vodka, his hands trembling, and slumped into a chair.

"Who was that guy?" Hambleton asked.

"You mean you didn't know?" exclaimed the officer. "That was Yuri Vladimirovich Andropov, chairman of the KGB."

As KGB chairman and a full member of the Politburo, Andropov was one of the busiest men in the Soviet oligarchy. Yet that evening in July 1975, he took time from his weighty duties to personally attend to someone really important, a visiting spy.

That spy is now in a British jail. The spymaster now rules the Soviet Union.

The Politburo itself periodically sits down to ponder details of espionage, deceptions and sometimes more sinister subterfuges. In the autumn of 1979 the Soviet rulers assembled to meditate upon a particularly delicate question. Should the KGB assassinate the president of Afghanistan, Hafizullah Amin, and replace him with a Soviet agent? After studying the plan, conceived by Andropov's underlings and approved by him, the Politburo voted *da*.

The KGB chose a well-qualified officer, Lieutenant Colonel Mikhail Talebov, to be the assassin. As a member of Directorate S, which illegally infiltrates disguised KGB officers and agents into other nations, Talebov was highly versed in clandestine tradecraft and accustomed to perilous assignments. Having grown up among Muslims in the Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, on the Iranian border, he spoke Farsi as well as any Afghan. And with identification papers forged by the KGB, he had lived several years in Kabul, passing as a native Afghan.

Talebov entered Afghanistan in late October or early November 1979, posing as an Afghan chef; and, through arrangements made by the KGB network in Kabul, he obtained a job as a cook at the presidential palace. In the palace kitchen the lieutenant colonel awaited his opportunity. Always he had with him a colorless, odorless poison brewed by the Technical Operations Directorate in Moscow specially for President Amin. And according to his reports to the Kabul Residency, at least twice he dropped poison into fruit juice ordered by Amin.

However, while aware of Amin's fondness for fruit juice, the KGB did not appreciate how wary and wily he was. Fearful of poison, he always filled his glass with small portions of juice from many different containers. By mixing the juice, he reduced the poison ingested from any one batch to a non-fatal level, and apparently did not even become ill, for there was no investigation of the kitchen staff.

Dubious about whether Talebov would ever succeed in



poisoning the president, Andropov and the Politburo ordered more forceful action. On the night of December 27, 1979, a KGB assassination team, led by a Colonel Bayerenov and backed by Soviet commandos, stormed the palace. In an upstairs salon they found Amin and killed him, along with a lovely female companion. But the palace guards fought so ferociously that Colonel Bayerenov dashed outside to call in reinforcements. Because the Soviets wanted no living witnesses to the assassination, the attacking troops were under orders to allow no one to leave the palace alive, and in the darkness they shot their commander, mistaking him for an Afghan.

Ultimately, the Soviets did kill nearly everyone inside the palace. Among the few survivors was Lieutenant Colonel Talebov. Though no one had told him of the raid, and no one had told the raiders about him, he managed in the confusion of the slaughter to escape.

Politburo members personally concern themselves with forgeries, as well as assassinations. In the fall of 1981 the KGB forged the signature of Ronald Reagan on a bogus letter to King Juan Carlos of Spain. The fabrication stated that representatives of the military, the political parties and the Catholic church close to the king were conniving to obstruct Spanish entry into NATO. It asserted that there were "good grounds" for the king to destroy "left-wing opposition," and hinted that if he did so the United States might support the return of Gibraltar to Spain. In sum, the letter depicted the President of the United States dictating to the king of Spain and interfering in Spanish internal affairs.

Evidently, this seemed like a good idea to the Politburo, and with its authorization KGB agents in Madrid mailed copies of the letter to Spanish newspapers and numerous European diplomats. But this little operation served no purpose except to envenom U.S.-Soviet relations. Spanish journalists promptly branded the letter a forgery, and several suggested it was Soviet-inspired. The White House interpret-