

## RENDEZVOUS IN WASHINGTON: AN INTERVIEW WITH RUSSIA'S LEGENDARY SPYMASTER MAJOR GENERAL (RETIRED) OLEG KALUGIN

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History is as much defined by circumstances and perceptions as they are by their actors. While debate over the minutest detail lies within the domain of history's most stalwart scholars, it is the available evidence that ultimately persuades the contemporary practitioner to draw parallels between the world that was and the reality it has evolved to become. The fields of diplomacy and defense in particular are driven by such national interests. Whether they are rooted in history (notably war and politics), economic comparative advantages (or disadvantages) or geographic placement, the aspirations to fully realize national identity leaves nothing to chance for those who wield its power. For those who rule, the ability to know addresses how to act, when to act and the degree to which it is acted upon that can decide a nation's fate. This cannot be obtained by the leaders themselves – someone must go out there and obtain it for them. Normally entrusted to the most ardent and enterprising of its patriots, the desire to act decisively on a strategic level requires uncommon sacrifice much less risk taking. Such people, win or lose, serve the intelligence branch of their country. In the field, they are known as 'spies.'

The purpose for interviewing General Kalugin is not to satisfy the historical record although a few of the anecdotes and insights offered are indeed new and offered here for the first time. With the 10 books attributed to his authorship, the methods, circumstances and rationale are clear. For intelligence aficionados, his 2009 edition of 'Spymaster' has been updated and bolstered in a new May, 2012 release [Author's Note: "Spymaster: My Thirty-two Years in Intelligence and Espionage against the West." St. Martin's Press: New York]. In it, he offers first-hand accounts of exploits not limited to: the stealing of U.S. atomic secrets; the 'Cambridge 5' (most notably Kim Philby), listening in on the interrogations at the 'Hanoi Hilton' as well as the Walker, Ames and Hansen cases. For the practitioner, the chronicle of Kalugin's 32-year career is equally telling as it offers context for issues today whether it is al-Qaeda, Syria, Iran, Israel, Afghanistan and the re-election of Putin amongst others.

The interview itself took place 11am, May 25<sup>th</sup>, 2012 in Washington. As we took our seats in a public, tree-lined establishment, one thing became clear; his 77 years are misleading as it has not diminished his purposeful gait nor his penetrating gaze. He is a survivor in an era where lesser KGB/FSB colleagues of late have not fared as well. Since he was there at the beginning, both sides would rather proceed with a 'business as usual' approach today than deal with scandal at home or diplomatic damage over things best left alone. As such, he fully understands the nuances of his explanations and when he desires to do so pulls no punches over things he is passionate about; especially the country he served for so long and so successfully.

**Dan Little:** The United States is known for using technology to gain intelligence. Do you feel there is an over-reliance on using it?

**General Kalugin:** *Well that is true especially in the initial stages of America's intelligence. They tend to rely too heavily on the technical collection as opposed to human collection. In many ways it made American strong and at the same time weak because one man who operates behind the lines may be far more important than thousands of technological devices scattered around the world. Well in fact I may quote French Emperor Napoleon who said 'one good spy in the right place is worth 20,000 soldiers in the battlefield.' One and 20,000...well that's correct. Also Sun Tzu, ancient China's great philosopher said something along the lines that 'to win a war in a hundred battles is not the acme of excellence. To win a war without a single battle that is the acme of excellence. Indeed, if you have the right person at the right place you may simply resolve the major issues without battles or military actions.*

*Well look I must say Osama bin Laden...so many troubles even with his name and yet the American intelligence...well European...American...well anyway they found him at some point and they got rid of him. How many thousands would have killed (for him)? I look myself a terrorist-inclined fellow but when you deal with the evil, you can't go away to convince or persuade to change his mind, you have to go straight. By killing one you save the lives of thousands. That is kind of a humanitarian approach...that is a fact of life. To save millions we have to get rid of some of those...particularly if they obtain access to nuclear weapons then the world will be totally at stake for survival. I am a tough guy in terms of intelligence, not only collection but intelligence operations. We could remove potential warmongering and unwieldy guys...perpetrators (by eliminating them).*

**Dan Little:** This brings up a particularly important point General because if I remember correctly your father was in the original NKVD. What I think people don't understand is that in your father's generation and in your generation the memory of survival, especially the Second World War (Russian – 'the Great War'), the army encircling the cities laying siege to certain places...maybe some of that is lost. What is it about intelligence today that is different than back then? Is it just a generational issue of survival? What's different?

**General Kalugin:** *My father, he had a very special mission unrelated to intelligence. He was a security guard. He was told to protect party leadership from attacks, physical or otherwise. So when I graduated from high school in 1952 and Joseph Stalin was still alive I like most people was an admirer of his. I told my father I will join the KGB, I want to be in the security of the state. His response was, "Don't do it, it is a dirty work." I said listen well you have been in it for 20 years. He said, "That's why I tell you it is a dirty work, stay away from it" [Laughter]. Do kids ever listen to their parents? So I did it my way. I spent six years studying foreign languages including Arabic by the way, German, English of course...everything related to history and culture of the language. When I graduated six years later, with Arabic I was supposed to go to Egypt as a junior attaché of the Soviet embassy. That was my first cover.*

*Two weeks before my departure, I was invited to the personnel department. Well that was a normal procedure. They asked questions: How is everything? How is your family? Are you happy? Have you had any problems? I said everything is fine. Then the guy said, "Well but you don't look like an Arab." I said no I never did. "Forget about it, you will go to the United States." I said really? In what capacity? "Yeah you will be a Fulbright scholar. Do you mind?" Well what's that? "Well that's a program of exchanges in science and culture for the Fulbright program so you will represent the Soviet (Union) part of it." Well go to New York and that was how it happened. I went to New York.*

*There were 18 other Soviets who went to the United States and 18 Americans came to Russia. That was 1958. Of these 18 Soviet guys, 10 were officers of the intelligence and one like myself. One guy was from the Communist Party Central Committee, a World War II veteran, Aleksandr Jakovlev. He would*

*become later one of the top reformers and closest ally of Mikhail Gorbachev in introducing and carrying out reform in the Soviet Union. Well that's how I came to America.*

*When I came back I accidentally recruited an American with access to classified information...when I was a student. No one expected it from me. That was not my mission. My mission was to learn the language, to live comfortably in America. But I wanted to again. This man said, and I remember it vividly, "You and Khrushchev, you have betrayed the cores of socialism. You are all traitors, young and Khrushchev." So I asked who are you? He said, "Oh, I am an American with Russian background and I follow changes in Russia. You are traitors!" Okay then I said what do you do for a living in this country? He said, "I am an engineer." So what specifically? "Oh well I am working in the area of solid manufacturing and research in solid fuels for missiles." At that time the race for space was you know very much in the headlines. So I understand technologically nothing but I smelled the rat - something is interesting. So I said let's go to the cafeteria. He was with a young lady. She was Chinese. As it turned out, her father was Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Science under Chiang Kai-Shek. Well anyway we went to the cafeteria and we had a two-hour conversation. In the end I thought he was a good guy. So I said okay you know what? Russia as you say is behind in many ways. You know what, you can help. He said, "How can I help?" Well I said bring all that you have access to. So a week later he brought documents...classified...with samples of solid fuel. And I said well that is your contribution to a better brand of socialism [Laughter]. He would later work as a Soviet source for many years. At some point he was approached by the FBI but that was many years later. He fled from America, settled in Russia, lived in Russia...with his Chinese wife.*

**Dan Little:** So the reaction of your superiors was what?

**General Kalugin:** *My superiors initially said he was a plant. Who knows? FBI? But the nature of the stuff he gave was so interesting. So they authorized my second meeting with him. When I went to see him a second time I was accompanied by a Russian officer...diplomat. He just 100 yards away, watching in case the FBI would move in. He would yell, "Oh provocation against a Russian student!" You know make a big scandal out of it. But nothing happened. I received all the stuff (and) that launched my career in the intelligence business.*

**Dan Little:** If you would be so kind to share with me your thoughts on what was a well-executed plan, a not so well-executed plan and why? What were the differences between both? That is since your retirement and is public knowledge.

**General Kalugin:** *The best operations we do not know about. That is why they are the best. By the way this recent arrest and expulsion of dozens of Russians with Anna Chapman...that was to me a most scandalous case; at which it does not show Russian intelligence in the best way. I tell you as far as I know from the media reports one of their main missions in the United States was to place someone in the State Department so they got them.*

*Well I tell you in my time we had access to the State Department documents without illegals. We would befriend American diplomats somewhere in Southeast Asia or Africa or Europe but not in Washington, it was difficult you know because there were strict rules but then it would continue. I myself can remember one of the guys and when he retired I was invited already to a shuttle hearing by a few friends in the State Department...you know real ones – not spies. So I was invited (afterwards) to the State Department for some event, you know July 4<sup>th</sup> or some big reception. And then as I was walking to get a glass of wine where all of a sudden I see a man standing in the corner looking at me with fear in his eyes.*

*I recognized one of our sources who I met in Russia...he was traveling from the Far East to Europe. We had made arrangements for him and I deliberately jumped on his train to look into his eyes and read his soul as President Bush said when he looked into Mr. Putin's eyes and read his soul. So then I met him and I talked to him and I thought he was okay. He is not a plant agent. This guy would give us all the good information. Now many years later, I live in America, I am denounced in Russia and I bump into him at the State Department. He looks at me thinking that I will finger him out and say 'ha here is a spy!' I do come up to him and shook his hand and said 'Hi, haven't seen you for a while. Don't be afraid you are in good hands.' That's it. That's all. He was never publicly exposed. He was never arrested.*

**Dan Little:** If I may move on then. The NATO Meeting in Chicago talked about the phase-out of military forces from Afghanistan. What partnerships or what initiatives do you think NATO forces should take advantage of or seize with the security apparatuses in Central Asia? Should they pursue a partnership? Should they transition?

**General Kalugin:** *Well number one, I would withdraw from Afghanistan. Number one...militarily. I myself was involved briefly in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan many, many years ago. And I travelled to Afghanistan before the Soviet troops moved in. I met the leaders of the Pro-Kremlin government. That was late 70's, early 80s. I met President Taraki, General Salvari and the main guy Hafizullah Amin. He was the Prime Minister, Hafizullah Amin. We became real friendly. Then some people in Moscow thought that Hafizullah Amin was a CIA double agent. So the Soviets did not cross the Afghan (border), though they convened and killed everyone so that now Afghanistan would be part of the allied (bloc). They failed dramatically because the Soviet system changed and Gorbachev said 'out of Afghanistan!' And that was right.*

*So I think America's involvement in Afghanistan is unjustified. Unjustified. I believe the withdrawal date now is 2014 I believe. I would have taken troops south. Well we have this guy Karzai - President. He looks like a nice fellow. He plays both ways and that is understandable. He wants to survive in his own country. So Americans sometimes don't like it. But after all he's got to profit. It shows on his face he is a man of his own making. That's my view, out of Afghanistan!*

*You know in the old days when America intervened in Afghanistan and the Soviet Union still existed that made sense because the Soviet political leaders in those days, they thought of moving out, spreading the Soviet system across the world. Afghanistan was one of the main territories. Then probably it would have been India, then Iran, other countries. So at that time American resistance was totally justified. Today I see no reason...nothing to do with that.*

**Dan Little:** So you don't feel there should be an operational exchange of information?

**General Kalugin:** *Oh there is some. Russia has been kind to help in some ways.*

**Dan Little:** As far as computers and cyber-attacks...do you consider this an extension of traditional intelligence?

**General Kalugin:** *Oh yes. It is different in terms of technology but essentially it is to disrupt the other side. I mean militarily or intelligence operations, etc. It is just a more modern way to do harm to the enemy.*

*You know what? Cyber-war has one major defect in my view. When these guided missiles hit some military targets on the ground they may simultaneously kill dozens of innocent civilians. This happens. So*

*I myself am not in favor. In my view they should be used very selectively. So there will be do damage to civilian populations. Otherwise it would actually make the war more difficult.*

**Dan Little:** There is such a thing as corporate spying and there is national spying – spying for one’s country. If they are both serving the national interest what is the difference between a corporate spy and a national spy?

**General Kalugin:** *If you consider a corporation as part of the government institution then there is no difference. In Russia, this combination of government and private enterprise has been really an amalgamation that it is hard to say what is private, what is government. This is what turns the Russian government today. It is kind of a toy of some highly-placed owners of business. But there are certain rules of behavior that applies to any country. For instance some Russian business people really try to manipulate the Russian government by using their huge savings. They overestimated their own power.*

*There was a guy named Berezovsky. I met him several times and he told me honestly he picked up Putin from nowhere. He thought Putin would be like a toy in his hands. He thought he would manipulate him. So Berezovsky miscalculated. As a result he now is in London. The other one was Khodorkofski. Same character: self-assured, rich. He wanted to run the Russian government and there was a clash of personalities so Khodorkofski landed in jail. Yet another one by name Gusinsky, well he went to Israel. So Putin and the current regime have managed to preserve the mechanism of power in their own hands. Of course the impact of major companies is also very strong but they do not rule the country.*

**Dan Little:** He (Putin) was your Lieutenant Colonel, did you have a chance to read his soul at all?

**General Kalugin:** *Well he was one of many guys who I supervised. I honestly recall him vaguely. I mean when I was number two man in Saint Petersburg – Leningrad in the field office, we had nearly 3,000 employees. He was one of them... I mean a Captain or something. So I dealt with the higher-level employees. But he would bring some papers to sign or something. So I vaguely remember his face. But what made Putin a figure of historical importance was his involvement with Russian politics on the local level. I can just give you a direct example. I don’t know if the name Sobchak tells you anything. Sobchak was the mayor of Leningrad...I mean Saint Petersburg...elected mayor. He was one of those that belonged to the democratic wing and we were friends on that basis. At one point when he became the mayor of Saint Petersburg, he approached me and said, “Listen I have no links to your security organization. It is really bad that I am the chief of the city and I do not have any one person who I can trust.” I said no I do not know anyone who you could trust. Then he found himself his former student by the name Putin.*

*Sobchak was the Dean of the Law School. Putin was one of his students. And he picked him up and offered him a job as an assistant in the mayor’s office; an assistant in Public Relations. Putin made a very important contribution at that time to (counter) the Russian economic problems. There was a shortage of food in Russia due to the collapse of the USSR. It was actually around ’91, ’92. That was when the Soviet system was falling apart. Well Yeltsin came up to power as leader of the Russian Federation around ’92. He said that “I hear Saint Petersburg has resolved the problem of the food supplies. There are no lines to buy bread. What is going on?” Sobchak said, “I have a nice assistant who made a very good deal through Finland selling oil products for food in exchange.” So that was the beginning of Russian involvement in providing the western nations with energy supplies; I mean oil, oil products, and natural resources. This is why Yeltsin said, “No let him come to Moscow.”*

*He was put on Yeltsin's Kremlin administration as Deputy Chief of the administration in charge of Russian property abroad. That is a very lucrative piece of work that Putin managed. He had the determination to do the job himself and he started working. That's another thing how you move from economic affairs to state affairs. I will tell you how at one point Yeltsin's family, his daughter was married to a guy by the name Yumashev. Yumashev's and Yeltsin's family were very involved in a criminal investigation for graft and corruption. Yeltsin was furious. How could his family be investigated? So he (Yeltsin) asked the Prosecutor General (Skuratov), "Can you stop it?" And the Prosecutor (General) said, "No I cannot stop it." He wanted to get rid of the Prosecutor General but according to Russian Law the prosecutor cannot be fired by the President. Only the Parliament could appoint and fire the prosecutor. So Yeltsin was so angry. This was when Sobchak said, "This guy Putin. He may handle the problem." Putin was working in the security sector and for the administration so he rented through the KGB an apartment in Moscow. The prosecutor was invited to that apartment and with two young, naked girls they were making heavy fun in the shower...you know bathroom. It was all videotaped and shown a week later on Russian public television. The Russian Parliament said immediately, 'Fire that Prosecutor General! He is no good!' So he was fired. Yeltsin felt Putin knew how to handle things so he was invited to a more senior position.*

*But I will tell you what Yeltsin said three months before he passed away. These are words, Yeltsin's words are on the record but not so widely known. He was asked a question by a Russian journalist, "Mr. President, as you look back at your career, what major errors of judgment do you believe you made?" Yeltsin replied, "Oh, I have made so many errors and mistakes." The journalist replied, "Could you single a couple or three?" Yeltsin replied, "Number one the war in Chechnya. Number two the choice of my successor - Putin." That was Yeltsin's words. He died a few months later. Well so that's how things happen.*

*Putin proved to be a very vigorous guy in trying to get Russia out of this dismal economic situation. He managed to earn a fairly good reputation among many Russians. Russia today is far better off economically than it used to be.*

*Putin gradually, slowly started to tighten the screws and slowly some of the democratic changes which Yeltsin introduced would (be) slowly, gradually but not totally wiped out but also not respected. That is what we have today in Russia. We have on the surface several political parties. We have free radio, television, media. But if they go too far in criticizing Putin personally, they may well... like in London (get) poisoned or like Polittkovskaya gunned down. I knew her personally. She was a very courageous lady in every quarter. She was killed. I'll say Galina Starovoytova. She was also killed in her apartment because she was very critical of Putin's corruption. And she would say so.*

**Dan Little:** *Coming full circle then, you are here in the United States and the difficulties you went through (charges of corruption against the KGB and counter-charges of being a double agent) is a matter of record. So what is it like to live in a country where you led intelligence operations against?*

**General Kalugin:** *No problem. I tell you I was well received in this country, very well received. Well as you know perhaps I was a political figure in Russia. At some point when I left the KGB and I spoke openly against the Soviet regime at that time, I was charged with treason. On the day I was to appear at the military tribunal in Russia to face charges of treason - a miracle happened. I was registered as a candidate to the Russian Parliament and I obtained immunity from prosecution. I won by a 1,300,000 votes; a seat in the Soviet Parliament. From that moment on I became a public figure, travelling around the world, talking about things and no one could touch me.*

**Dan Little:** But that didn't last.

**General Kalugin:** No, the Soviet Union fell apart and I had a choice. So I went into business. I became Deputy Chief of the Russian Telecommunication Company in charge of Foreign Operations. I found a way to AT&T in the United States and we made a major deal with AT&T. AT&T invited me to America and they opened an office here for me as their Russian representative. My job was to promote AT&T across the Post-Soviet space. That is Ukraine, Baltic States...well that was what I was doing. Traveling back and forth, doing the job and getting a good salary. I was well received in this country. We actually had an office right across [from] the White House [Laughter]. It was 15<sup>th</sup> Street and 'H' I believe.

**Dan Little:** If only you could turn back the clock back 20 years [Laughter].

**General Kalugin:** Well everything was going well. Until some point when as I say Putin called me a traitor and I called him a war criminal. That led to the situation when I said publicly, "How can you (Putin) a lawyer by profession call me a traitor without due legal process? You're [Putin] a war criminal like Mr. Milošević of Yugoslavia that is what I can tell you in exchange for your insult." So in a hurry they started not an investigation but illegal actions. I was charged finally, officially by the prosecutor in Russia. That was several months later after the exchange and sentenced to 15 years in jail. But... an interesting point, without confiscation of property. Normally in Russia, any treason or sentence of this character would inevitably lead to the confiscation of property. In my case the prosecutor said 'not confiscation of property as he did not have material considerations.'

**Dan Little:** General if you would be so kind to close this out. Can you tell us how the International Spy Museum came about?

(Author's Note: The International Spy Museum, Washington, DC where General Kalugin is a Board Member - <http://www.spymuseum.org/> Recently a museum was opened in New York where General Kalugin recently returned from the Grand Opening. On display is Anna Chapman's laptop.)

**General Kalugin:** Let me tell you it is a private institution. The owner by name Milton Maltz, he used to work for the U.S. intelligence services during World War II and he preserved some good memories. And he thought why not make it attractive as a profession to the younger generation. He just found a guy with a collection of espionage gadgetry. He invited him as a collaborate and then he offered me a position as Director General of the Spy Museum. I declined at the time and I said "I am very grateful but I am afraid that because I am a foreigner I may be unaware of many problems of finance and a bureaucratic nature typical of America." Russians and Americans have different mentalities and technologies. He (Mr. Maltz) said, "Okay do you have any ideas (who)?" I said well there is a great guy I know named Peter Earnest from the Public Relations office of the CIA. He is a charming man. He was Chief of Station to the CIA in Greece. So he was approached and Peter agreed. He has been working as the Director ever since. I became a member of the Board of Directors which includes Judge Webster (Former Director of the FBI). I am the only representative of the Eastern Bloc [Laughter].

**Dan Little:** There is one question I neglected to ask Sir. What perception of American threat is necessary or unnecessary...Americans perception of the threats against them? Is it exaggerated or is it not?

**General Kalugin:** Well it depends. As to Russia, Russia is not a threat... no more. I say in the old days when Russia wanted to expand and turn the whole world into a part of a socialist society, it was a threat.

*Russia gave up all its internationalist (aims) and is primarily concerned about its survival. Because the USSR fell apart but inside Russia today there are national elements like Chechens, Dagestan, Ingush, you know Tartarstan which create some problems for Russian integrity. So America in that sense is not Russia's concern, neither is Russia for America. For America concern is from the Moslem countries where extremists, those who organized the 9-11 events, those who would do anything to destroy, people who do not care about their own lives and of course do not care about millions of people. These are the worst enemies in the world...of the whole world. They have to be caught and isolated. That is the most humanitarian way, I'm sorry to say that. So we have to keep America and other civilized nations strong and not allow extremists to dictate how to live.*

**Dan Little:** Well General, it has been said that both Russia and the United States need an enemy. Some may reminisce that at least when the Cold War was around there was a purpose. Do you really feel that we need to have that kind of...

**General Kalugin:** *No, no we are not enemies anymore. Russia is a hurt, humiliated nation. In that sense when a person is humiliated he sometimes looks more aggressive because he wants to restore his dignity and that is what makes Russia look willing to compete. It will not compete with the United States, it is all over. It is China more likely to be the main competitor. Not Russia these days. This hurt national pride and dignity that is what feeds some anti-American sentiments, 'It is America which bears responsibility for our demise.' Which is not correct. America did it best but it was Russia's internal problems from within what destroyed the Soviet Union from within.*

*Obtaining information, that is a different story. Even the United States would try to get some information from its allies, if the allies would not give it to them particularly in the area of high technology, not so much political information. So in that sense espionage will remain forever. It's just simply knowledge prior to decision-making. You cannot make a correct decision unless you know all the nuances.*

*By the way sometimes it goes back to World War II. The Soviet intelligence provided Joseph Stalin, the Soviet leader at the time with great intelligence. I happen to know the source and even how it happened. One of our foreign sources in Moscow, he was a foreigner...American. He learned from his friends at the German Embassy in Moscow, that Hitler is going to attack Russia on June 22d - a week later. It was reported to Stalin immediately. But Stalin was a victim of his own mindset. A year before that there was a Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, sort of a friendship treaty. Stalin said, "Come on, these are provocations... Why would Germany attack us, we are friends. Who spreads rumors about German attack?" Someone was called and (he) said that this was an American correspondent. So Stalin said, "Kick him out from the country! Out!" So he was thrown out just a week before Germany invaded Russia. He was thrown out of the country and that was the beginning of the war. Many years later... that man, well he worked in the United States and became a well-known journalist. When I came to the United States, I found him. I knew his name. I called him and said, "I have best regards from your old friends in Moscow and I would love to see you. Maybe we will become good friends too." His response was, "If you call me again I will call the FBI and they will throw you out of the country." So I never called him again [Laughter].*

**Dan Little:** It's only fair I guess [Laughter].

**General Kalugin:** *That was a true story. You see Stalin was told the intelligence. We could only deliver it.*

**End of Interview**



