WHISPERS & LIES

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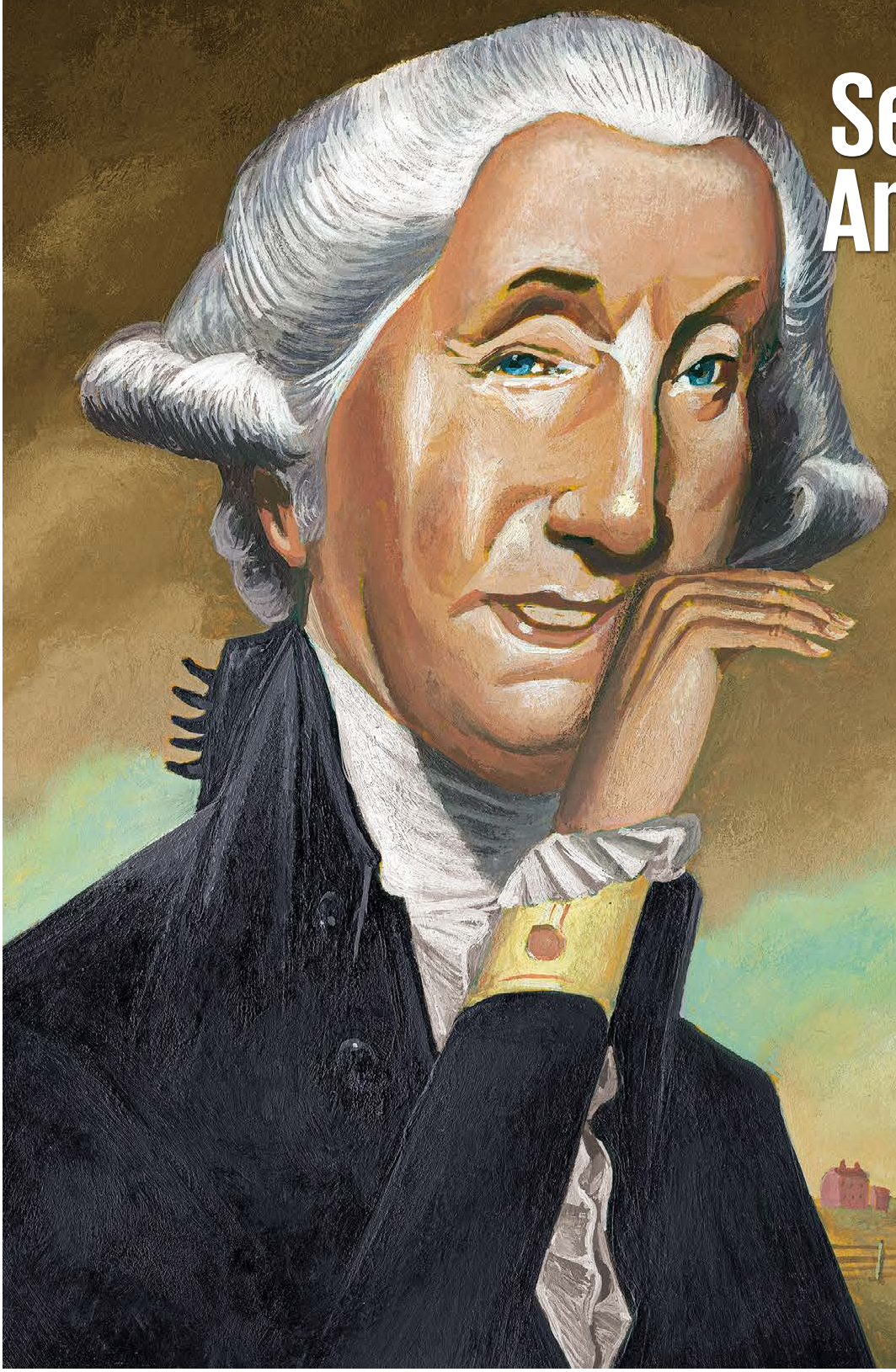

Secrets of American History

EXCLUSIVES AND REVELATIONS

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An inside look at the FBI's desperate mole hunt

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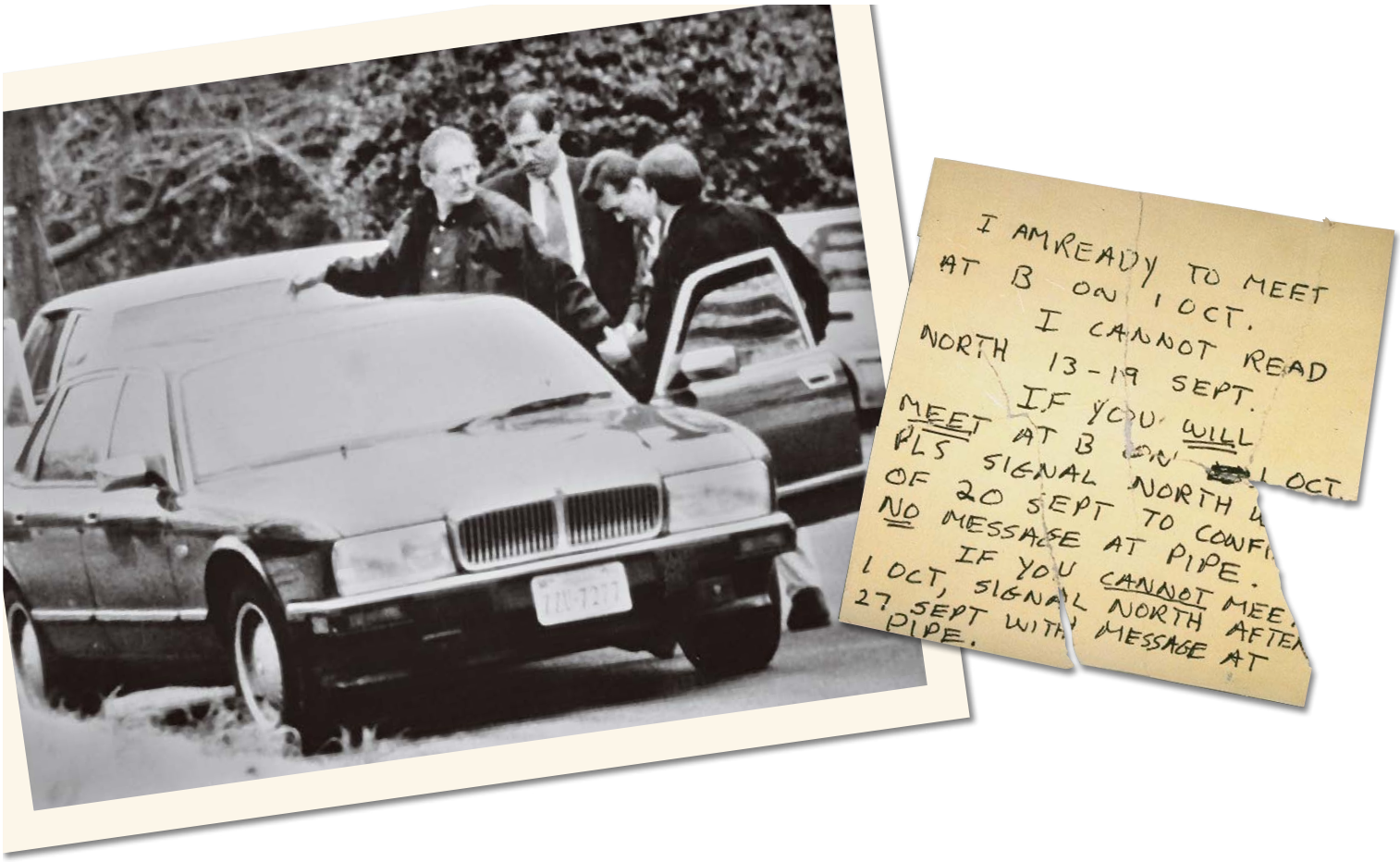
SECRETS OF AMERICAN HISTORY

THE PHANTOM MENACE

WAS A MOLE BEHIND THE STILL-UNEXPLAINED BETRAYALS THE CIA SUFFERED DURING ONE OF ITS MOST CATASTROPHIC YEARS? AND IS HE (OR SHE) STILL OUT THERE?

BY DAVID WISE

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JONATHAN BARTLETT



Aldrich Ames' spying (above: a note recovered from his trash) led to his arrest (above). But his debriefing couldn't explain the loss of three major assets.

London, May 17, 1985: Oleg Gordievsky was at the pinnacle of his career. A skilled intelligence officer, he had been promoted a few months before to *rezident*, or chief, of the KGB station in the British capital. Moscow seemed to have no clue he'd been secretly working for MI6, the British secret intelligence service, for 11 years.

That Friday, Gordievsky received a cable ordering him to report to Moscow "urgently" to confirm his promotion and meet with the KGB's two highest officials. "Cold fear started to run down my back," he told me. "Because I knew it was a death sentence."

He'd been back at headquarters only four months earlier, and all seemed well. Now, he feared, the KGB's counterspies had become suspicious and were recalling him to confront him.

If he refused the summons, he would destroy his career. But if he returned home, he could be shot.

His MI6 handlers assured him they'd picked up no sign anything was wrong. They urged him to go to Moscow, but they also provided him with an escape plan in case he signaled that he was in danger.

Gordievsky decided to risk his life and go.

Athens, May 21, 1985: After the Tuesday-morning staff meeting at the Soviet Embassy, Col. Sergei Ivanovich Bokhan stayed behind to talk to his boss, the local rezident of the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence agency.

As the deputy chief, Bokhan was privy to all GRU spy operations aimed at Greece, the United States and the other NATO countries. After they chatted for a while, the rezident said, "By the way, Sergei, this cable came in" and tossed it over. It said Bokhan's son, Alex, 18, was having trouble in military school and suggested the deputy take his vacation now, three months early, and return to the Soviet Union to deal with him.

Bokhan froze. "Stay calm," he recalls telling himself. *"They know."*

His boyhood nickname, back on a collective farm in Ukraine, was "Mole." Now a stocky, powerfully built man of 43, he had been working for the GRU for 16 years—and feeding Soviet secrets to the CIA for 10. He knew instantly that the cable was a ruse. Only a few days earlier he had called his brother-in-law in Kiev, where Alex was studying, and been assured his son was doing well.

Bokhan assumed that both the KGB and the GRU were watching him. He decided to leave Athens—but not for Moscow.

Moscow, August 3, 1985: It was 2 a.m. when Andrei Poleshchuk got home. The 23-year-old journalist had been working late for Novosti, the Soviet press agency. Through the windows of the ground-floor apartment he shared with his parents, he could see strangers moving about. A large man let him in and flashed a badge.

"Your father's been arrested," the man said. He would not say why.

Arrested? Impossible. His father, Leonid Poleshchuk, was a senior KGB counterintelligence officer, most recently the deputy rezident for counterintelligence in Lagos, Nigeria.

For months, Andrei had been hoping his father would find him an apartment. He had graduated from school and found a good job, and he wanted to live on his own. Housing in Moscow was nearly impossible to find, even for a KGB officer, but sometime that May, he'd received a seemingly miraculous letter from his father. It said his parents had unexpectedly heard of an apartment they could buy for him; his father decided to take his vacation early and come home to close the deal. Leonid and his wife, Lyudmila, had been back two weeks when the KGB showed up at their door.

"It was surreal, like a bad nightmare," Andrei told me. "I could not believe what was happening. I went into the bathroom, locked the door and stared at myself in the mirror."

The KGB men searched the apartment all night. "In the morning, they took us—my mother, my grandmother and me—and put us in separate black Volgas," Andrei said. They were driven to the infamous Lefortovo prison for interrogation.

On that first day, Andrei pressed his questioners to explain why his father had been arrested. One of them finally answered: "For espionage."

The year 1985 was a catastrophe for U.S. and British intelli-gence agencies. In addition to Gordievsky, Bokhan and Poleshchuk, more than a dozen other sources were exposed. That fall, the KGB rolled up all of the CIA's assets in the Soviet Union in a lightning strike that sent the agency reeling. Ten agents were executed and countless others imprisoned.

Faced with these unexplained losses, the CIA in October 1986 set up a small, highly secret mole-hunting unit to uncover the cause of this disaster. With the arrest of Aldrich Ames in 1994, it seemed that the mole hunters had found their quarry. When he began spying for the Russians almost a decade earlier, Ames was chief of the CIA's Soviet counterintelligence branch, entrusted with secrets that would be of incalculable value to the KGB. He was about to be married, and his debts were mounting.

After Ames was arrested and charged with espionage, his at-

torney, Plato Cacheris, negotiated a plea bargain with prosecutors: Ames' wife, Rosario, an accomplice in his spying, would be spared a long prison sentence if he cooperated fully with the authorities. In extended CIA and FBI debriefings, he talked about his nine years of spying for Moscow—including the day when he turned over, in his words, the identities of "virtually all Soviet agents of the CIA and other American and foreign services known to me."

That day was June 13, 1985, by Ames' account. In his fourth-floor office at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, he wrapped up five to seven pounds of secret documents and walked out of the building. He drove across the Potomac River to Washington, D.C. and entered Chadwicks, a popular Georgetown restaurant, where he handed the documents to a Soviet Embassy official named Sergei Chuvakhin. The agents he betrayed that day, he has said, included Oleg Gordievsky, whose CIA code name was GTTICKLE; Sergei Bokhan, or GTBLIZZARD; and Leonid Poleshchuk, or GTWEIGH.

But the CIA and FBI debriefers soon recognized a glaring anomaly in Ames' account: It was clear that those three agents had fallen under suspicion in May 1985—before Ames insists he handed over the documents.

"The timeline just didn't work" to explain Gordievsky's recall to Moscow, FBI Special Agent Leslie Wiser, who ran the Ames case, told me. "At least the timeline based on what Ames said when he was debriefed.... If it wasn't Ames, then it was someone else, so we began to search for the source of the compromise," Wiser said.

That raised a possibility that remains, even today, a subject of deep concern among counterintelligence agents, a problem privately acknowledged but little discussed publicly: That the three agents may have been betrayed by a mole inside U.S. intelligence whose identity is still unknown. The FBI declined to comment on whether the search Wiser began is continuing.

The mere belief that there's another mole, whether correct or not, can cause chaos inside an intelligence agency. During the 1960s, a corrosive mole hunt led by James J. Angleton, the CIA's counterintelligence chief, led to institutional paranoia, paralyzed operations aimed at the Soviet Union, and disrupted the lives of many innocent CIA officers who were fired or sidetracked in their careers. And yet to an intelligence

agency, ignoring the possibility of a mole isn't really an option, either. The stories of Oleg Gordievsky, Sergei Bokhan and Leonid Poleshchuk—reported here in extensive new detail and based on interviews with Gordievsky, Bokhan and Andrei Poleshchuk, as well as former FBI and CIA officials—suggest the damage a mole can do.

As soon as Gordievsky landed in Moscow, he picked up signs that he had gambled wrong. On the front door of his apartment, someone had locked a third lock he never used because he had lost the key; he had to break in. Clearly the KGB had searched his flat.

Some days passed before his boss, Viktor Grushko, drove him to a KGB dacha, saying some people wanted to talk to him. Gordievsky was served sandwiches and Armenian brandy. The next thing he knew, he woke up half-dressed in one of the dacha's bedrooms. He had been drugged. A KGB general told him he had confessed. "Confess again!" the general roared.

Gordievsky was taken home, but Grushko confronted him at the KGB the next day. "We know very well that you've been deceiving us for years," he said. Gordievsky was told his London posting was over, but he would be allowed to remain in a non-sensitive KGB department in Moscow.

It was apparent that Soviet counterintelligence agents did not yet have enough evidence to arrest him. Gordievsky believes they were waiting to catch him contacting British intelligence. "They expected I would do something stupid," he told me. But it was only a matter of time. "Sooner or later they would arrest me."

His escape plan was bound under the flyleaf of a novel; he had to slit the cover open to read the instructions. He was to stand on a certain Moscow street corner on a designated day and time until he saw a "British-looking" man who was eating something. He did so, but nothing happened. He tried again, following the fallback plan, and this time a man carrying a dark-green bag from Harrods, the upscale London department store, walked by eating a candy bar. It was the signal to launch his escape.

On the appointed day he started *proverka*, or "dry-cleaning"—walking an elaborate route to throw off anyone who might be watching him. From a Moscow railroad station, he made his way by train, bus and taxi to a point near the Finnish-

Soviet border, where he hid in some grass by the roadside until two cars stopped.

Inside were three British intelligence agents—the candy-bar man and two women, one of whom was Gordievsky's MI6 case officer in London. Although Gordievsky has written that he climbed into the trunk of one of the cars, a former CIA officer says he actually crawled into a space in a specially modified Land Rover. Had the Russians examined the car, they would have seen the hump on the floor where the driveshaft would normally be. But this Land Rover's driveshaft had been rerouted through one of the vehicle's doors, the former CIA officer says, so that Gordievsky could fold himself into the hump, in effect hiding in plain sight.

They drove through several checkpoints with no trouble, but they had to stop at Soviet customs when they reached the border. When the driver turned off the engine, Gordievsky could hear dogs close by—Alsatians, he later learned. Minutes passed. His fear mounted. He started having trouble breathing. The women fed the dogs potato chips to distract them. Then the car started up again, and the radio, which had been playing pop music, suddenly boomed out Sibelius' *Finlandia*. He was free.

In Athens, Bokhan called an emergency telephone number that rang in the CIA station inside the American Embassy. He asked for a fictitious Greek employee. "You have the wrong number," he was told.

The coded exchange triggered a meeting that night with his CIA case officer, Dick Reiser, who cabled headquarters in Langley that BLIZZARD was in trouble. Soon there was a plan for an "exfiltration," the CIA's term for spiriting an agent in danger out of a foreign country.

Five days after Bokhan received the cable about his son, he took his wife, Alla, and their 10-year-old daughter, Maria, to the beach. He had never told his wife that he was working for the CIA—it would have put her in mortal danger—but now he had to say something. As they walked on the beach that Saturday, he said his career was in trouble. Would she ever live in the West?

"What country?" Alla asked.

"It doesn't matter," he said, and quoted a Russian proverb:

IN HIS OFFICE AT ~~CIA HEADQUARTERS~~ IN LANGLEY, VIRGINIA, HE WRAPPED UP ~~FIVE TO SEVEN~~ POUNDS OF ~~SECRET~~ DOCUMENTS AND WALKED OUT OF THE BUILDING.

"S milym rai i v shalashe." If you love somebody, you will have heaven even in a tent.

"I don't want to live in a tent," she said.

He dropped it, sensing that he was getting into dangerous territory. They had a sumptuous lunch—Bokhan knew it might be his last meal with his family—and Maria bought a stuffed Greek doll called a patatuff. After they drove home, he packed a gym bag and announced that he was going for a jog. Then he kissed his wife and daughter goodbye.

He drove around Athens in his BMW for close to an hour to make certain he wasn't being followed, then walked into a 100-foot pedestrian tunnel under a highway. Reiser was waiting in a car at the other end. In the back seat were a jacket, hat and sunglasses. Bokhan put them on as Reiser drove to a safe house. After dark they left for a small airport, where Bokhan boarded a CIA plane. After stops in Madrid and Frankfurt, a military jet flew him across the Atlantic. At Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland he looked out the window and saw several black cars and people on the tarmac. He asked if they were there to greet an important diplomat. "No," he was told, "they're here for you."

He walked down the steps and shook hands with the waiting CIA officers.

"Welcome to the United States," one of them said.

After months of interrogation at Lefortovo, Andrei Poleshchuk told his captors he wouldn't answer any more questions unless they told him who his father worked for. "That's when they showed me a piece of paper with the words, 'I met Joe,'" Andrei told me. "It was in my father's handwriting." Leonid Poleshchuk knew his first CIA case officer, who had recruited him in Nepal, as Joe. "It was the KGB's way of saying my father worked for the CIA," Andrei said.

Before Leonid Poleshchuk left Lagos, he had asked the CIA

for $20,000 to buy the apartment that was supposedly waiting for him. The agency cautioned that it would be too risky for him to bring that much cash through the airport and told him the money would be in Moscow, stashed inside a fake rock.

What neither the CIA nor Poleshchuk knew was that the "apartment" was a KGB operation. The Soviets had arranged for the apparent good news to reach his wife through a friend and former co-worker in Moscow, who wrote to her in Lagos. Poleshchuk was lured back to his fate.

Leonid never made it to the rock, his son said. A Russian TV documentary shows a shadowy figure picking it up, but Andrei said it is an actor, not his father.

In June 1986, Leonid was tried and, predictably, convicted. Andrei was allowed to visit him in prison only once, after he was sentenced to death. "At first I couldn't even recognize him," Andrei said. "He had lost a lot of weight. He was thin, pale and obviously sick. He was like a walking dead man. I could sense he had been tortured." Leonid was executed on July 30. The KGB told Andrei his father's remains were cremated and there would be no grave.

In the history of U.S. intelligence, only three major moles— men whose betrayals had lethal results—have been identified.

Before Ames, there was Edward Lee Howard, a CIA officer who had been slated to go to Moscow but was fired instead for drug use and petty theft. On September 21, 1985, Howard eluded FBI surveillance and escaped into the New Mexico desert with the help of his wife, Mary, and a pop-up dummy in his car's passenger seat (a technique he had learned in CIA training). Just the day before, Moscow had announced that a Soviet defense researcher named Adolf G. Tolkachev had been arrested as a CIA spy. Inside the CIA, Howard was blamed for Tolkachev's unmasking and subsequent execution, although Ames, too, had betrayed the researcher's identity. (Howard, Russian authorities reported in 2002, died of a fall in his KGB dacha near Moscow. One news account said he had fallen down the stairs and broken his neck.)

After Ames, there was FBI agent Robert P. Hanssen, who was arrested in 2001. In spying for Moscow on and off over 22 years, Hanssen revealed dozens of secrets, including the

eavesdropping tunnel the FBI had dug under the Soviet Embassy in Washington and the identities of two FBI sources within the embassy, who were also executed. Hanssen, who was convicted of espionage, is serving a life sentence in the supermax federal prison in Florence, Colorado.

U.S. counterintelligence agents have established that neither Howard nor Hanssen had access to the identities of all the American intelligence sources who were betrayed in 1985. So the discrepancy between Ames' timeline and the exposure of Gordievsky, Bokhan and Poleshchuk remains unexplained.

In July 1994, Leslie Wiser, the FBI agent who unmasked Ames, flew to London to interview Gordievsky. The resettled spy told Wiser he was convinced Ames had betrayed him, but he confirmed that he had been abruptly summoned back to Moscow on May 17, 1985—almost four weeks before Ames said he named him to the KGB. From the day they talked, Wiser told me, "we believed it was important for us to consider the strong possibility that Gordievsky was compromised by someone within the U.S. intelligence community."

Wiser acknowledges that Ames may have lied or been mistaken about the date—Ames has conceded that he drank heavily before his meetings with the KGB. But Ames always insisted to the FBI, the CIA and the Senate Intelligence Committee that he revealed no significant sources before his meeting at Chadwicks. In April 1985, he has said, he told a Soviet contact in Washington the names of two or three double agents who had approached the CIA but who were actually working for the KGB—"dangles," in intelligence parlance. He did so, he said, to prove his bona fides as a potential KGB mole. In a letter to me from the federal prison in Allenwood, Pennsylvania, where he is serving a life sentence, Ames wrote: "I'm quite sure of my recollection that I gave the KGB no names of any other than the two or three double agents/dangles I provided in April '85, until June 13th."

For those who are betrayed, the damage persists long after the initial shock passes. A few days after Oleg Gordievsky was recalled to Moscow, the KGB flew his wife, Leila, and their two daughters there, and he broke the unwelcome news that they would not be posted back to London. "When I came to Moscow, she left," he says, taking the children with her on a vacation.

Andrei Poleshchuk still wears the gold watch that served as a bond between his father, who was executed by the KGB, and his father's case officer at the CIA.

THE ~~KGB~~ TOOK HER TO ~~A SANITARIUM~~, WHERE SHE WAS ~~DRUGGED~~ AND ~~INTERROGATED~~ FURTHER. "I WOULD NEVER, EVER SEE HER ~~SMILE~~ AGAIN."

After Gordievsky escaped, a Soviet military tribunal sentenced him to death in absentia. He underwent a debriefing by MI6 and cooperated with it and other Western intelligence services. He traveled frequently, to the United States, Germany, France, New Zealand, Australia, South America and the Middle East. He met with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and President Ronald Reagan, wrote a memoir and co-wrote a book on the KGB.

He always hoped Leila would join him in England. She did, in 1991, but the strain caused by six years of separation proved too much to repair. By 1993 their marriage was over.

Sergei Bokhan was also separated from his family for six years. Within two weeks after his flight to the United States, he had a new name, a fake background, a Social Security number and a 9-millimeter Beretta. He stayed in safe houses in Virginia at first, then lived half a year in California to learn English, moved back East and consulted for the CIA and some U.S. companies.

When Bokhan escaped from Athens, the KGB hustled his wife back to Moscow, searched her apartment and began a series of interrogations. "For two years I went to Lefortovo two, three times a week," Alla Bokhan told me. "We had neighbors that were very close. Everyone avoided me. If I was waiting for the elevator, they went down the stairs. I had no job. When I found a job, the KGB called and they fired me. That happened several times."

Finally, in 1991, with the KGB in disarray after its chief led the failed coup against Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, the authorities let Alla and her daughter leave. They flew to New York and, with help from the CIA and the FBI, were reunited with Sergei at a motel near John F. Kennedy International Airport. He had champagne and flowers waiting, a big basket of fruit, chocolates and a balloon. There were embraces, and

everyone cried. Maria, then 16, was carrying the patatuff.

Bokhan's son, Alex, also made it to the U.S., in 1995. He works as a computer programmer. For a long time he resented the impact of his father's CIA spying on his own life. "I was angry because I was dropped from military school and sent to the Army, far off, near Vladivostok," he said. "I was 18 years old." He sees that episode differently now. "After many years, I understood him. It's OK. To be dead or to be alive was the question for my dad. He didn't have a choice." Today, Sergei and Alla live quietly in the Sun Belt under his new identity.

Andrei Poleshchuk told me his father's arrest was a disaster for his mother. "It shortened her life," he said. "Soon after his arrest she collapsed psychologically. I will never forget the day when I got home and she was singing songs, melodies, no words, and looking insane. Her eyes were empty. It was scary."

The KGB took her to a sanitarium, where she was drugged and interrogated further. After some months, she was released. But, he adds, "I would never, ever see her smile again." She died three years later, in 1988.

After his father was executed, Andrei kept working for Novosti. In 1988, he took a Moscow river cruise and met "a blond, blue-eyed and very beautiful" woman named Svetlana, who worked for an automotive magazine. They married in 1993, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and he worked for an independent newspaper in Moscow for a time. In 1997, Andrei and Svetlana emigrated to the United States. They have two children, and he works as an independent research analyst for business and government contractors in Northern Virginia.

Soon after they arrived in the United States, there was a ceremony honoring his father at a Russian Orthodox church in Washington. "Afterward, we drove to a home in Virginia for a reception, where I met Joe," Andrei told me in a conversation over lunch at a restaurant tucked away on a side street in Washington. Leonid's original case officer "blamed himself for years for letting my father down. Joe had become very close to my father and worried that some action by him, some error, had led to his betrayal."

Before his father left Lagos, Andrei said, he gave a gold watch to his CIA case officer at the time. "He asked it be given to Joe, with a message, 'Here is something from Leo.'" By the

time Joe learned of the gift, Andrei said, his father had been arrested. "Joe said to his people, 'Keep the watch, I want to give it to his son.'" At a reception after the church ceremony, Joe gave Andrei the watch.

He was wearing it the day we met.

Intelligence agencies cannot tolerate unsolved mysteries and loose ends. Long after the massive losses in 1985, the lingering questions still gnaw at their counterintelligence experts. Milton Bearden, who held several senior posts is his 30-year career at the CIA, is convinced there was a traitor, as yet undetected.

"Some of it just didn't add up," he says. "The mole isn't just some guy who stole a few secrets. He might be dead, or he's living in his dacha now. And the intelligence culture is not going to let that go. There is no statute of limitations for espionage. These things have to be run to ground."

If there is a fourth mole, and he is still alive, the FBI would surely want to catch him and prosecute him. The CIA would want to debrief him at length to try to determine the full extent of his treachery. If it should turn out that the mole is no longer alive, the intelligence agencies would still run a damage assessment to try to reconstruct what and whom he might have betrayed.

"That the KGB ran a 'fourth mole' is undeniable," Victor Cherkashin, a wily KGB counterintelligence officer, has written. Of course Cherkashin, who worked in the Soviet Embassy in Washington and handled Ames, may have been unable to resist a chance to taunt the FBI and the CIA.

It is possible that Gordievsky, Bokhan and Poleshchuk fell under KGB suspicion through some operational error or communications intercept. But some highly experienced U.S. counterintelligence experts doubt it.

John F. Lewis Jr., a former FBI counterintelligence agent who was chief of the national security division, believes there is a fourth mole. "I always thought there was another one," he told me. "There were certain anomalies that took place that we just couldn't put our finger on."

And Bearden says, "I remain convinced there is a fourth man. Maybe a fifth. I talked to some old MI6 friends, and they say they are sure there is. Either one of ours or theirs." O

National Treasure

Skyfall

by Michael Dobbs

When U-2 pilot Gary Powers was shot down, cold war tensions reached new heights

FROM THE SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

As he floated to earth, parachuting toward the vast Russian steppe on the morning of May 1, 1960, American U-2 pilot Francis Gary Powers envisioned the "tortures and unknown horrors" awaiting him in a Soviet prison. He debated whether to use his suicide device—a poison-laced injection pin—hidden in a silver dollar coin and suspended, as he later described it, like "a good luck charm" around his neck.

President Dwight D. Eisenhower was relaxing at his mountain retreat, Camp David, when he learned that a U-2 "Dragon Lady" spy plane had gone missing. The subsequent news—that it had been shot down over Russia—came as a devastating blow. Eisenhower had been relying on the CIA's top-secret overflights to map suspected Soviet missile sites. The shootdown jeopardized a long-planned summit with Soviet premier Nikita Khrushchev in Paris, scheduled to begin May 16.

Thus began a sequence of fateful decisions, miscalculations and blunders that set in motion one of the tensest periods of

True Story?

History Film Forum: Secrets of American History *explores how movies capture the past*

History has never been hotter in Hollywood. And now a program at the National Museum of American History will screen upcoming films, including Ron Howard's *In the Heart of the Sea* and Matthew McConaughey's *Free State of Jones*, as well as controversial vintage works, such as *The Birth of a Nation*, to examine the dilemmas of portraying the past on the big screen. November 19 to 22.

HistoryFilmForum.si.edu

the cold war—and serves as the backdrop to the new Steven Spielberg film, *Bridge of Spies*, which recounts the effort to negotiate Powers' release. Many artifacts associated with Powers' mission, including a rug from his prison cell and the journal he kept during much of his nearly 21-month imprisonment (above right), are on display at the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum.

Eisenhower had authorized high-altitude reconnaissance flights over enemy territory on the understanding that the Soviets would never get hold of a "live pilot." His aides assured him that the plane would virtually disintegrate before it hit the ground.

Confident that the evidence had been destroyed, the president approved a cover story claiming that a civilian "weather plane" had gone missing over Turkey. He was stunned one week later when Khrushchev disclosed that the U-2 pilot was "alive and kicking." Remnants of the plane were exhibited in Moscow's Gorky Park.

"Downed Pilot Alive," blared a *Los Angeles Times* headline describing Khrushchev's announcement before the Supreme Soviet. Although Khrushchev traveled to Paris for the summit, the Russian leader canceled the meeting when the president refused to apologize.

The human back story to this drama is reflected in the journal kept by the 31-year-old Powers, at the suggestion of his cellmate, a Latvian political prisoner, Zigurd Kruminsh. (Although sometimes described as a secret journal, the diary likely was known to the Soviets: The blank notebook was in a packet delivered to Powers by the American Embassy.) The diary, donated to the museum by the Powers family, opens with a detailed description of the U-2 shootdown. A Soviet SA-2 missile exploded near the spy plane as it cruised at 70,000 feet, over the Ural Mountains near the city of Sverdlovsk, ripping off both wings.

"Good Lord, I've had it now," Powers screamed to himself, he recalled in the journal, as the plane spun out of control—"in an upside down position with the nose pointing at the sky." After ejecting and parachuting into a field, he was captured by Russian farmers as soon as he hit the ground.

Powers later said that he received virtually no training for such an eventuality, and only minimal instructions on how to

The Lockheed U-2B plane piloted by Francis Gary Powers was shot down over Russia in 1960. Powers ejected and parachuted into enemy hands.

behave under interrogation. He testified at his Moscow show trial that it was "more or less up to me whether to use" the suicide pin, issued by the CIA "in case I was captured, [and] would rather be dead."

The journal provides a glimpse into the state of mind of perhaps the most high-profile prisoner of the entire cold war, chronicling his anguish over his unfaithful, alcoholic wife, Barbara Gay Powers. (The Soviets allowed her a conjugal visit, which she would recount in her memoir, *Spy Wife*—"I was swallowed up by our passion.")

The pilot also expressed his doubts about U.S. foreign policy, and his desperate hopes for early release. In his cramped hand, Powers talks about becoming "a nervous wreck," kept sane in part by Kruminsh, "one of the finest people I have ever known."

Based on extensive research, the pilot's son, Francis Gary Powers Jr., now believes that Kruminsh was probably "a plant," assigned by the KGB to keep an eye on his fellow prisoner.

The spare MA-2 pressure helmet from the time of Powers' mission. The U.S. Air Force insignia normally on the front of the helmet had been painted over and replaced by Powers' ID number.

He also thinks that his father was subjected to intense "psychological pressure." "He was not tortured," says Powers Jr., founder and chairman emeritus of the Cold War Museum in Warrenton, Virginia. "But there were bright spotlights, grueling questions, sleep deprivation, threats of death."

On February 10, 1962, Powers was exchanged in Berlin for a Soviet spy, Rudolf Abel, on Glienicke Bridge, the site central to the Spielberg film.

Powers returned home to criticism that he should have activated his suicide pin rather than be captured; a Congressional hearing in March 1962 exonerated him. He divorced in January 1963. As a civilian, he began test-flying U-2s for Lockheed. Later, he piloted traffic-reporting helicopters for a Los Angeles TV station. Powers died on the job in August 1977, when his aircraft, which had a faulty gauge history, ran out of fuel and crashed.

It took Powers' family many years to refute the allegation that the pilot had a duty to kill himself. In 2012, the Air Force posthumously awarded the Silver Star Medal for Powers' demonstration of "exceptional loyalty" to his country during his captivity. O

TEXT BY Katie Nodjimbadem

ILLUSTRATION BY
Elyse Salazar

Ask Smithsonian

YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED BY OUR EXPERTS

Why do astronauts aboard the International Space Station seem to float? The ISS is only about 200 miles above Earth—where, according to Newton, gravity is almost as strong as it is here on the ground.

Stan Pearson, Newport News, Virginia

They experience weightlessness not because of a lack of gravity but because the ISS, and they, are orbiting Earth in constant free fall, says *Valerie Neal, curator of space history at the National Air and Space Museum.* They're falling toward Earth and moving forward at about the same velocity. Because the downward and forward forces are nearly equal, the astronauts are not pulled in any specific direction, so they float.

Did the colonists really mount a massive chain across the Hudson River during the American Revolution? The required engineering skill and smithing manpower would seem beyond them.
Jono Mainelli, New York City

They really did. In 1778, the colonists, who then produced 14 percent of the world's iron, forged the Great Chain to prevent a Royal Navy invasion upriver, says *David Miller III, associate curator at the National Museum of American History.* The chain consisted of 750 links, each two feet long and weighing more than 100 pounds. Soldiers stretched the iron barrier, supported by log rafts, across the river at West Point. They removed it in winter, to keep it from being broken up by river ice, and replaced it in spring throughout the war.

It's generally known that a female honeybee's stinger will rip away after stinging, fatally for the bee. Why would natural selection favor such a defense mechanism?
Michael Nieters, Des Moines, Iowa

This defense works for the colony, if not for the individual: Those females, worker bees, cannot reproduce, but their self-sacrifice defends the egg-laying queen. Also, says *David Roubik, an entomologist at the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama,* the parting of bee and stinger exposes a gland that releases a pheromone alerting other colony members to sting the victim at that spot.

How did "wink" become a unit of sleep, as in "didn't sleep a wink" or "40 winks"?
Daniel Beltz, Rochester Hills, Michigan

To "wink" meant to close one's eyes for sleep as early as the 14th century, says *Ives Goddard, senior linguist at the National Museum of Natural History.* But "40 winks" as a synonym for "nap" didn't appear until the 19th century, according to the Oxford English Dictionary. How that idiom evolved is a matter of speculation.

Methane decays rapidly in sunlight, so why or how is it a greenhouse gas?
Gary N. Miller, Davenport, Florida

That decay is *relatively* rapid; methane still lasts about eight years in the atmosphere. And like every other greenhouse gas, it traps heat in the atmosphere by absorbing infrared radiation, says *Patrick Megonigal, deputy director of the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center.* In fact, methane is about 30 times more efficient than carbon dioxide as an infrared absorber.

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