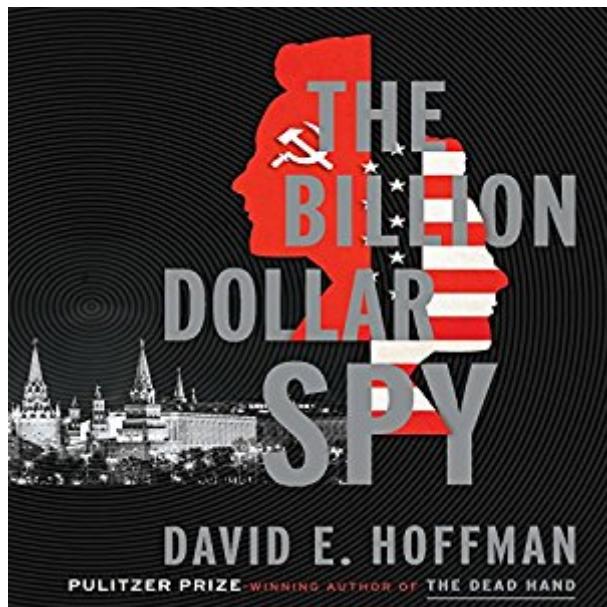


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The Billion Dollar Spy: A True Story Of Cold War Espionage And Betrayal



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

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 espionage 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.

Here is a spell-binding story of the late Cold War. In the late 1970s and early 1980s the United States and the Soviet Union were locked in an apparently permanent deadlock in which neither side was able to gain a decisive advantage. Then one evening in Moscow a man knocked on the window of an American diplomat at a filling station and handed him an envelope. That momentary encounter was to lead to a years long and highly productive relationship which gave the US crucial access to Soviet planning and technological developments. It is not overstating things to say that that meeting was one of the turning points of twentieth century history. David E Hoffman is the ideal writer for this

riveting tale, with long experience at the Washington Post and PBS and as the Pulitzer Prize winning author of several histories of the Cold War and of Russia. In the 1960s and early 1970s US espionage within the Soviet Union was almost non-existent, thanks primarily to the influence of the brilliant but paranoid James J. Angleton, head of Counter-Intelligence at the CIA. Angleton believed that no Russian defector and no offer of intelligence from Russians could be trusted because they were all part of a complex Soviet plot to mislead the West. It was not until after Angleton was forced to retire in 1974 that the CIA began to develop contacts within the Soviet system, including military and KGB officials who were willing to provide intelligence. The most valuable of these contacts, the so-called billion dollar spy, was the man who rapped on the diplomat's car window. Adolf Tolkachev was an engineer with high security clearances who willingly provided enormous amounts of information over a period of several years.

Over the course of more than 20 meetings with his CIA handlers, Adolf Tolkachev passed on thousands of pages' worth of military secrets -- information that gave the United States a decisive lead in the final stages of the Cold War arms race that would last right into the 1990s, and that saved the Defense Department and its contractors in excess of \$2 billion dollars. In exchange, Tolkachev got -- well, I won't spoil this tale of Cold War espionage for you; you'll simply have to read it for yourself. Compared to some of the other stories of its kind -- from the atomic bomb spies to Kim Philby and his circle; Aldrich Ames and Robert Hansen, and so on -- this is a remarkable tale. Tolkachev, a scientist deep inside the Soviet Union's military industrial complex, yet never a devoted member of the Communist Party, had decided long before he began his espionage activities that he couldn't support the Soviet regime. Simply supporting dissidents wasn't enough; he calmly set about making contact with the CIA in Moscow at a time when the latter were ill-equipped to run agents of any kind -- much less of his importance -- in the heart of the "denied zone". The tale of his persistence, the CIA's recognition of the treasure that had walked into their embrace, and the unfolding of their relationship is the kind of stuff of which great fiction is made -- but this is a true story. It's a tribute to David Hoffman's research abilities and writing skill that he's made it feel like a un-putdownable novel; I simply couldn't get to sleep until I found out what happened to Tolkachev and his CIA handlers. It's hard to say much while still avoiding spoilers, or revealing too many details that, if not actual spoilers, would affect your enjoyment: you'll want to discover this yourself.

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