



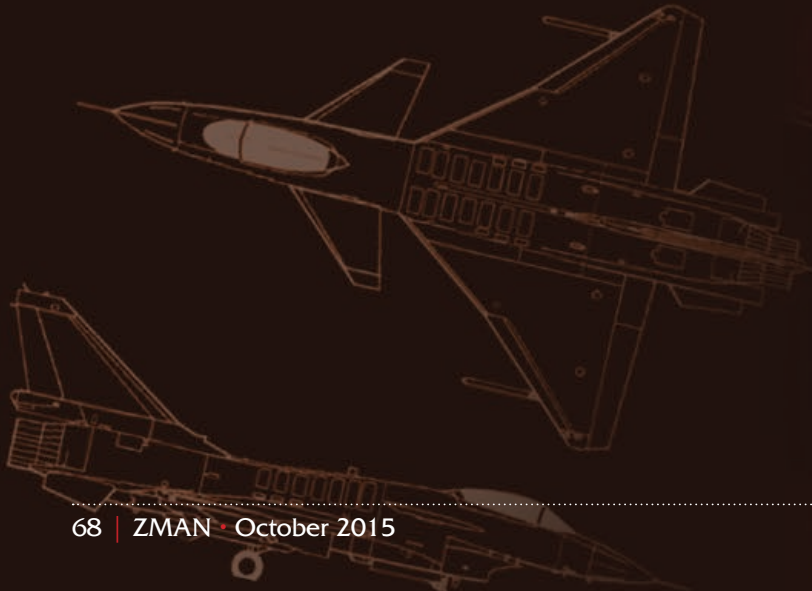
*He was not a KGB agent or Soviet diplomat, like most Soviets who spied for America, just a humble civil engineer. Nevertheless, he did more damage to the Soviet cause than any other spy. At great risk to his life, he handed over vital military secrets to the US, stolen from the Soviet air force, allowing the US to finally gain air superiority over its enemies—a situation that remained for decades afterward. Here is the incredible story of a Soviet citizen whose name commands inordinate respect in the corridors of the CIA.*

*- Shimon Rosenberg*

A Dramatic Spy Story

# The Billion \$\$\$\$ Spy

The Story of Adolf Tolkachev,  
Soviet Citizen and American Hero



January 1977. It was characteristically chilly in Moscow, the Soviet capital. Around six in the evening, Robert Fulton, the CIA station chief in Moscow, filled up his tank at a gas station reserved for diplomats and other foreign dignitaries. His car now full, Fulton was about to open the door when a shadowy figure appeared seemingly out of nowhere.

"You are an American?" the man asked Fulton in English. "I would like to speak to you."

Fulton was caught off guard. "Uh... it's difficult to speak here," Fulton replied. "How can I help you?"

"Oh, it's difficult?" the man responded. Then in Russian he said, "Excuse me," and tossed a folded note onto the driver's seat.

The entire exchange lasted no longer than 15 seconds. The stranger quickly disappeared down a side street. Fulton sat down in his car and drove to the US embassy. He noted that there were no cars following him.

As soon as he entered the embassy, he took the elevator to the ninth floor, passed through a group of US Marines on guard, walked to the end of the hallway and took the steps down to the seventh floor. There, on the left side, was a thick steel door sealed with a special electronic lock. Fulton entered the combination and the door swung open.

He entered and walked down the short hallway to another door that resembled a bank vault. Inside was a square, windowless chamber. The room had a low ceiling and thick metal walls to protect it against intruders and eavesdropping devices. This was the CIA's "Moscow Station."

As soon as Fulton was inside and certain that he was secure from foreign eyes or ears, he opened the folded note. The piece of paper was blank. Inside was yet another note with handwriting on both sides in Russian.

The writer stated that he wanted to "discuss certain affairs," top-secret in nature, with an "appropriate American official." He offered to meet in an underground subway station or in a car.



The US embassy in Moscow in the 1970s (The embassy has since moved to a newer building).



The gas station in Moscow reserved for use by diplomats where Adolf Tolkachev handed over his first letter to the CIA station chief.

It was not unusual for Soviet citizens to pass notes to Americans. Fulton had learned to be extremely cautious in these instances. It was common for the KGB to try to trick unsuspecting CIA agents. Then they could embarrass America by trumpeting the "illegal espionage activity" they uncovered and make a show of deporting the exposed spy, a CIA agent posing as a diplomat, back to America. It happened more than once that a CIA agent went to a "secret conference," believing that he would be meeting a high-ranking spy, only to find KGB agents waiting to arrest him. The agent was then declared *persona non grata* and promptly evicted from the country.

Fulton could do nothing until he received approval from the higher-ups in Washington. He immediately informed his superiors of the note through a diplomatic cable, the

highly secure telegram system used by the State Department. He wrote that the man who approached him appeared to be in his late fifties or early sixties; that he was dressed like "an average Soviet resident," wearing a long coat and fur hat; and that he appeared to be nervous.

In his opinion, it looked like someone private that had something to sell. It would be worthwhile for the CIA to sniff out the situation a bit more and see if there was anything to be gained from starting a business relationship with the man.

Officials at CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, however, were convinced that this was just another KGB trick to bag yet another American official. Fulton was sent a strict warning to ignore the letter and do nothing.

## A Second Attempt

On February 3, the CIA heard from the man again. This time, Fulton was sitting in his car near the US embassy with the motor running when he suddenly heard a knock on the window. He turned and was surprised to find the same man standing there. They were only a short distance from a Russian police station, but Fulton's car was blocked from view by a mound of snow.

As soon as Fulton lowered his window the man tossed a letter inside and then turned around and left. Nobody followed him.

This time the note included instructions. The man wrote that if the Americans were interested in meeting with him they should park Fulton's car on a nearby street the following evening. Again Fulton decided to ignore the man.

Two weeks later, on February 17, Fulton left the embassy building as usual around 6:45 PM. When he reached his car he saw the man step out of a telephone booth about 30 feet away. Fulton ignored him and headed for his car, but the man came toward him.

"What do you want?" Fulton asked.

The man replied that he had another letter and threw a folded note into Fulton's

car. He then turned around and walked away.

The note said that he understood that the CIA was concerned that it was a KGB trap. But, he explained, he was an engineer, not a specialist in espionage, who worked in a Soviet military research facility. He promised that in the near future he would reveal



Persona non grata. In 2013, Russian authorities arrested Ryan Fogel, an American diplomat/CIA agent who tried to recruit Russians to spy for America. Bottom: Fogel's Russian ID card.



Items the Russians found on Fogel at the time of his arrest.

