



# THE SPY WHO WOULD BE TSAR

The Mystery of Michal Goleniewski  
and the Far-Right Underground

Kevin Coogan



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Michal Goleniewski was one of the Cold War's most important spies but has been overlooked in the vast literature on the intelligence battles between the Western Powers and the Soviet Bloc. Renowned investigative journalist Kevin Coogan reveals Goleniewski's extraordinary story for the first time in this biography.

Goleniewski rose to be a senior officer in the Polish intelligence service, a position which gave him access to both Polish and Russian secrets. Disillusioned with the Soviet Bloc, he made contact with the CIA, sending them letters containing significant intelligence. He then decided to defect and fled to America in 1961 via an elaborate escape plan in Berlin. His revelations led to the exposure of several important Soviet spies in the West including the Portland spy ring in the UK, the MI6 traitor George Blake, and a spy high up in the West German intelligence service. Despite these hugely important contributions to the Cold War, Goleniewski would later be abandoned by the CIA after he made the outrageous claim that he was actually Tsarevich Alexei Nikolaevich of Russia – the last remaining member of the Romanov Russian royal family and therefore entitled to the lost treasures of the Tsar. Goleniewski's increasingly fantastical claims led to him becoming embroiled in a bizarre *demi-monde* of Russian exiles, anti-communist fanatics, right-wing extremists and chivalric orders with deep historical roots in America's racist and antisemitic underground.

This fascinating and revelatory biography will be of interest to students and researchers of the Cold War, intelligence history and right-wing extremism as well as general readers with an interest in these intriguing subjects.

**Kevin Coogan** was a veteran investigative journalist. His previous books include *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fascist International* (1999).



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The Mystery of Michal Goleniewski  
and the Far-Right Underground

*Kevin Coogan*

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I had been interested in the strange pseudo-chivalric ‘Shickshinny Knights’ for many years. In the early 1980s, a friend and I drove to Shickshinny and met Charles Pichel. We simply knocked on his door. It was around three in the afternoon. Pichel, a very old man, was in his pyjamas watching TV. We chatted for a bit and then left. If Charles Pichel were a secret master of the universe, he disguised his role brilliantly. The only thing I really remember about the encounter was that Pichel had displayed an award from some rightist group in Asia in his living room.

My interest in the Knights led me to the fantastic tale of Michal Goleniewski. I had known about Goleniewski as a minor character in books on the CIA and James Jesus Angleton in particular. That fact alone aroused my curiosity. Why did a top Eastern Bloc defector suddenly declare he was the Tsar of Russia? I was also acquainted with the writer Peter Tompkins. A former member of the wartime intelligence organization, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), Tompkins wrote exotic books about the secret history of the pyramids and the hidden life of plants. Tompkins had met Goleniewski. He told me that he didn’t think Goleniewski was the Tsar, but that he could be very convincing in person.

A few years ago, I first heard about Leszek Pawlikowicz’s 2004 book *Tajny Front Zimnej Wojny: Uciekinierzy z Polskich Służb Specjalnych 1956–1964* (Secret Front of the Cold War: Refugees from the Polish Special Services 1956–1964). Pawlikowicz’s study of Cold War defectors was made possible by the opening up of Polish intelligence service archives to qualified scholars. Pawlikowicz included a long section on Goleniewski in his study.

I then took the 7 subway train seven stops until I reached one of the most remarkable institutions in the world, the Central Research Division of the New York Public Library on 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Fifth Avenue. Naturally, Pawlikowicz’s book was in its incredible collection. Without that book and that library, I would never have attempted, much less written, *The Spy Who Would Be Tsar*.



As far as I know, my book is the first scholarly study of Goleniewski, although I draw on both Guy Richards' and Pierre de Villemarest's earlier portraits.<sup>1</sup> As part of that study, I also turned to the librarians and archivists at Boston University, who graciously helped guide me through the relevant sections of the Edward Jay Epstein and Tennent Bagley collections.

The research for the book led me down many strange rabbit holes. For that reason, I am eternally grateful for Professor Michael Hagemeister's help. One of the world's leading experts on the history of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, Professor Hagemeister's advice (along with his own published studies) proved invaluable. I am most grateful, however, to my editor Craig Fowlie for his friendship and his willingness to take a chance on a slightly eccentric Yank.

After writing a book about such compulsive shapeshifters as spies, I hope this book will help open a new conversation about Goleniewski as there is clearly much more to be learned. For this reason, I would like to conclude by especially thanking whoever declassified (I suspect mistakenly) Goleniewski's January 1960 'Sniper' letter, which proved so invaluable for my research.

Kevin Coogan, New York City, February 2020

## Note

- 1 As I was finalising sending this manuscript to the publisher, I became aware of a forthcoming book on Goleniewski by the British journalist Tim Tate. We have had no contact with each other so these should be regarded as entirely separate parallel investigations. Tate's book is listed as forthcoming in my bibliography.

# PUBLISHER'S FOREWORD

Kevin Coogan passed away on 27 February 2020 in his beloved New York City.

Kevin sent me a letter, that I received after his death, with instructions to publish this book (which was already under contract) and another manuscript then under review called *The Secret History of the Japanese Red Army*. That manuscript is currently being edited by Japanese politics scholar Professor Claudia Derichs and will be published in 2022.

I sought advice and approval from Kevin's sister Nell, and she shared my desire to honor Kevin's memory by proceeding with the publication of both manuscripts. I am extremely grateful to Nell for her invaluable and unstinting support in helping me to see both these manuscripts through to publication.

Although we had corresponded before then, I first met Kevin Coogan in person in New York City (NYC) in 2012. I had greatly admired his 1999 book *Dreamer of the Day: Francis Parker Yockey and the Postwar Fascist International* and a mutual acquaintance put us in touch with each other. Our first meeting was in the Routledge office – then on Third Avenue – and we went out that evening for drinks and dinner. That was the start of a friendship that lasted until his untimely death.

Kevin and I shared a great interest in political history, in the extremes of right and left, in fringe cultural movements, and in 'deep politics', the murky clandestine underworld where intelligence agencies, organized crime, terrorists and other extremists conspire and collaborate to influence political outcomes. We corresponded frequently about these topics, his research and writing projects and my publishing programme, as well as our shared passions for books, music and films. This book emerged from those conversations.

I used to visit the Routledge NYC office every few months and always made time to see Kevin. Occasionally we went to talks at the Tamiment library at New York University (Kevin was a regular attender of talks and events in NYC's busy intellectual scene and would often e-mail me afterwards with his thoughts on the

speakers). Sometimes Kevin would act as my tour guide and we'd explore on foot some of the offbeat parts of that wonderful city while Kevin would regale me with his exceptional knowledge of the history of NYC. He was always a brilliant dinner companion – a genuine polymath who was exceptionally knowledgeable about so many different subjects and we shared a similar sense of absurdist, and occasionally dark, humour. So, while we would spend hours in conversation on weighty historical, political and cultural topics, there was also lots of laughter.

Kevin was extremely generous with his time and knowledge, happy to help other researchers with insights, material and sources. When news of his death became public, as well as expressing their grief, this was one of the topics frequently mentioned by journalists, scholars and anti-fascist researchers. In tribute to his generosity of spirit, and the breadth and depth of his scholarship, we have also added a bibliography of all his writings and research at the end of this book.

Kevin sent me his manuscript just days before he died, and it is that manuscript which is the basis for the book you are holding. I have edited and formatted the manuscript, making corrections to typos and grammatical mistakes, removing some repetition, reordering some of the content and adding the occasional detail when the meaning was unclear. I have also checked, and occasionally updated, the references and bibliography (updates to the references are marked [CF]). I decided on a final title as we had not resolved this earlier. I'm sure Kevin would have polished the final manuscript better than I have but as Bob Dylan would sing a month after Kevin's death, 'it is what it is'.

Kevin once told me that in writing the Yockey book, he started with a biography and ended up with a film noir. And there is a similar feel to this book which branches out from Goleniewski's, already strange biography, to explore dozens of other obscure, fringe, extremist and underground individuals, organizations, publications and events. As in *Dreamer*, the manuscript takes some strange tangents into areas that are related only distantly to a conventional narrative biography.

Kevin told me often that when you are researching, similar to when you are exploring a city on foot, it's the smaller unexplored pathways, the offbeat side alleys, the subterranean arcana and even the trap streets that are often the most interesting places to explore. We always then envisaged that the final book would stay true to this, rabbit holes, digressions, mysteries and all. So I've made no effort to cut sections or over-simplify the narrative. I've also retained Kevin's penchant for posing questions but not resolving them when the available evidence does not support this.

What you will read are Kevin's words and in the final form that I believe he wanted them to be. This is his book and it is my privilege to be able to assist in its publication. Although it will always be tinged with sadness that Kevin will never get to see it.

I am writing this at home during the pandemic lockdown. I would love to have had a chance to talk with Kevin about that, the recent global Black Lives Matter protests and a pivotal US Presidential campaign. He would, as he always did, have had illuminating things to say about all of them.

In conclusion, I hope that publishing this volume is the most appropriate tribute that can be paid to Kevin's extraordinary research, analysis and writing.

*Bella Ciao*, old friend. We'll always have the Algonquin.

Craig Fowlie, Global Editorial Director for  
Social Science Books, Routledge  
Autumn/Fall 2020

# PREFACE

If you ask people in Poland interested in espionage who was the greatest Polish defector in the Cold War, they might likely reply with a name almost unheard of in the rest of the world: Ryszard Kuklinski.<sup>1</sup> From the early 1970s to the eve of the declaration of martial law in December 1981, Colonel Kuklinski, a staff officer for the Polish General Staff, provided the CIA with somewhere between 35–40,000 pages of highly classified documents outlining everything from tank designs to Warsaw Pact maneuvers before he and his family defected to the USA.

Yet another top defector from Polish intelligence, Lt. Colonel Michal Goleniewski, however, remains obscure even in his native land. On 4 January 1961, Goleniewski entered the US Consulate in West Berlin and announced he was ‘Sniper,’ the name he first used in April 1958 when he began sending the CIA secret intelligence reports. His defection, some two decades earlier than Kuklinski’s, doomed him to a certain obscurity, especially after he was marginalized by the CIA. Nor was he a Polish nationalist hero. Goleniewski even claimed he was not Polish but Russian.

Today Goleniewski is best remembered (when remembered at all) for his startling claim that he was ‘H.I.H. [His Imperial Highness] Alexei Nikolaevich Romanoff, The Heir to the All-Russian Imperial Throne, Tsarevich and Grand Duke of Russia, Head of the Russian Imperial House, etc. and August Ataman etc. etc.’<sup>2</sup> Put more simply, he claimed that he was the hemophilic son of Nicholas II, born in 1904 and long believed murdered by the Bolsheviks with the rest of his family in the Siberian city of Yekaterinburg in July 1918.

Some years ago, Goleniewski became a bit better known. On 20 April 2005, Poland’s public TV channel ran a documentary entitled *Człowiek cien* (Man of Shadows). One consultant to the program was Leszek Pawlikowicz, who teaches history at Rzeszow University in southeast Poland. In 2004, Professor Pawlikowicz published *Tajny Front Zimnej Wojny: Uciekinierzy z Polskich Służb Specjalnych 1956–1964* (*Secret Front of the Cold War: Refugees from the Polish Special Services 1956–1964*). He devoted

close to one hundred pages on Goleniewski with the most important section taken from a formerly secret investigation and trial of Goleniewski conducted by the Sad (Court) of the Warsaw Military District (*Warszawskiego Okręgu Wojskowego/WOW*), which on 18 March 1961 sentenced Goleniewski to death in absentia. Pawlikowicz's study reignited my long-standing curiosity about Goleniewski.<sup>3</sup>

Michal Goleniewski was one of the Cold War's most important spies. Such an assertion may sound quite strange since for decades in mainstream espionage books Goleniewski has been relegated to the same one or two set paragraphs ritualistically repeated.<sup>4</sup> Yet it was the CIA's legendary counterintelligence chief James Angleton who told the journalist Edward Jay Epstein that Goleniewski was the most complicated defector case the CIA had ever seen.

In January 1975 Michal Goleniewski launched *Double Eagle*, his crudely produced amateur personal newsletter. It appeared in the wake of his remarkable claim that Henry Kissinger, Richard Nixon's former National Security Advisor and the then-current US Secretary of State, was a secret Russian agent. His charges were first announced in a 20 March 1974 article in the John Birch Society (JBS) weekly publication *Review of the News*. The author was Goleniewski's friend Frank Capell, an associate editor of the *Review*. He was best known, however, as the long-time publisher of an anti-communist newsletter called *Herald of Freedom*.

In the late 1970s, Capell became the 'Grand Prior' of a far-right pseudo-chivalric organization known as the Knights of Malta. Capell and his fellow Knights began their collaboration with Goleniewski in the early 1960s. They even proclaimed him as 'Grand Master' of their Order, which they claimed had its roots dating back to Catherine the Great's son Tsar Paul I.

Before beginning any investigation of Goleniewski, it is necessary to address the elephant in the room, the one wearing the tin foil hat. A significant part of Goleniewski's story sounds flat out crazy, some of it obviously is. When Edward Jay Epstein interviewed Goleniewski in the early 1980s he found him lucid on all matter espionage related. He only veered into 'crazy' when discussing his royal claims. Nor was Epstein's experience unique.

James Angleton was not even convinced that Goleniewski was mad. Former CIA officer Tennent 'Pete' Bagley reports that 'JA' didn't believe Goleniewski was insane but that he used insanity 'as a way out.'<sup>5</sup> Bagley, however, disagreed. In his book *Spy Wars*, he writes about Goleniewski: 'It was a great loss to our side when, all too soon after his defection, this sharpest of counterintelligence minds slipped into delusion and his information became confused and misleading.'<sup>6</sup> Yet Bagley remained convinced that Goleniewski had provided critical clues to the existence of a covert Soviet-Nazi spy network *Die Hacke* that supposedly flourished at the height of the Cold War.

The far-right French former spy and espionage author Pierre de Villemarest published a 1984 biography of Goleniewski entitled *Le Mystérieux Survivant d'Octobre*. He personally encountered Goleniewski's bizarre behavior when Villemarest arrived in New York on 11 May 1981 to interview him. Goleniewski refused to see him even though Villemarest had written him a month earlier announcing his impending visit.<sup>7</sup> In his book *Le Dossier Saragosse*, Villemarest reflected:

The disinformation services of Spetsnaz preformed marvelously and even succeeded this time to penetrate the yet restricted circle of the American friends of Goleniewski. No need to physically intervene against him. Moscow knew that worn out by years of playing a triple game in which he constantly risked his life, weakened by his hemophilia, in constant terror that the protection assured him by the FBI through the years no longer existed, stunned to find that the climate of rapprochement with the USSR intensified with each passing year, Goleniewski began losing his mind.<sup>8</sup>

The intelligence professionals who dealt with Goleniewski tried hard to distill gold from the shattered alembic of his mind. In much the same way, we will do so as well, keeping in mind that it is just this infuriating mix of illumination and delusion that makes Goleniewski's story so challenging.

Yet Goleniewski is not the only strange character in this study. As a result, his trail leads down some very twisted paths from an obscure pseudo-chivalric order in Pennsylvania, to a huge run-down mansion in Staten Island, to a notorious SS General, who reportedly lived in Eastern Europe after World War II. And did I mention the US Army Colonel who said he saw a real-life UFO and believed in Roswell conspiracy theories? Or the former CIA official who was convinced that Heinrich Himmler was living in Washington?

## Structure

That said, I have organized the book in a fairly straightforward way. The introduction provides a brief summary of the 'labyrinth' of Goleniewski's life. The first chapters of Part I ('Sniper') provide some background on Goleniewski and his family as well as his life inside Polish intelligence up to his defection in early January 1961.

Chapters 4 and 5 explore the impact of Goleniewski's revelations on both American and British intelligence. In the US chapter the focus is on the CIA and its legendary Chief of Counterintelligence James Jesus Angleton. The chapter explores the complications arising from the competing claims of a series of defectors such as Goleniewski, Anatoliy Golitsyn and Yuri Nosenko. In the UK chapter I examine how Goleniewski helped to expose a number of Soviet spies including MI6 traitor George Blake and the 'Portland spy ring.' Both chapters explore the paranoid and debilitating 'molehunts' – based in part on evidence from Goleniewski – as MI5 and the CIA searched for further potential traitors within their own ranks.

In Part II, 'Hacke', I examine Goleniewski's claim that the Soviet Union had established a postwar intelligence network in both Eastern and Western Europe with high-ranking 'former' Nazis. I also reveal how information from Goleniewski led to Heinz Felfe, a senior counterintelligence officer in the West German Federal Intelligence Service BND, being exposed as a Soviet spy.

This section further focuses on the mysterious history of a leading SS General named Heinrich Müller, whose fate fascinated not just Goleniewski but some top

figures inside the CIA, especially James Angleton. I follow Müller's trail to Prague, Czechoslovakia,<sup>9</sup> before concluding my investigation.

In Part III, 'King of Queens'. I examine Goleniewski's break with the CIA and his links to well-established conservative, far-right and anti-communist networks in Washington that hoped to use him for their own political purposes. When Goleniewski next publicly declared that he was the rightful heir to the Romanov throne, a new cast of characters takes center stage starting with an obscure New York City publisher named Robert Speller and the former UK Liberal Party MP Richard Bessel. I conclude by looking at how these far-right networks combined to promote Goleniewski's shocking claim that Secretary of State Henry Kissinger was a Soviet agent code-named 'Bor.'

Finally, in Part IV of the study 'Knights of Malta', I depart from the roughly chronological depiction of Goleniewski's life. Our labyrinth goes further back in time before reconnecting this organizational and ideological history to the final decades of Goleniewski's life. It looks at a bizarre group called the Knights of Malta which claimed it was the direct successor of the legendary knightly order founded during the Crusades. I first examine the complicated role various White Russian exiles played in working with such figures as Henry Ford to lay the basis for a new radical right underground dedicated to promoting the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*. This same network in both the USA and Europe closely cooperated with the early Nazi Party thanks to an obscure organization named Aufbau. The results of this collaboration helped spawn a new radical right network in the USA centered on the sinister figure of Boris Brasol, and an utterly strange White Russian political operative named General Arthur Count Cherep-Spiridovich, who, in turn, would be found dead, under mysterious circumstances, in a vast mansion in Staten Island.

While these organizations largely operated *sub-rosa*, they maintained close ties with Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, the most prominent claimant to the Romanov throne and his wife Grand Duchess Victoria, Queen Victoria's granddaughter. Kirill and Victoria were early Hitler supporters while also enjoying access to New York's high society elite.

This constellation of far-right and antisemitic Russians and their American collaborators included 'Leslie Fry,' author of *Waters Flowing Eastward*, a defense of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and her allies such as Henry Ford. This world laid the basis for a pro-Nazi and pro-White Russian organization named Blue Lamoo, out of which a far-right chivalric order the Shickshinny Knights would emerge in the mid-1950s. A few years later, Goleniewski would become involved with the Knights and this same group would become the most vocal advocates of Goleniewski's claim to the Romanov throne.

I conclude Part IV with a closer examination of the Shickshinny Knights and the group's somewhat astonishing links to sections of the American military as well as at least one former official of the CIA who became a Goleniewski enthusiast.

Finally, in my conclusion 'Imaginary Castle', I try to provide an overview of the ongoing questions surrounding Goleniewski's strange life and try to make sense of his incredible story. To ease the reader's path through the labyrinth of



Goleniewski's life and the related subjects I explore, there is a 'Cast of characters' and a 'Chronology' of his life in Poland at the end of the book

My hope then is that this study will finally shed some light on one of the most mysterious figures ever to emerge out of the shadows of the Cold War.

## Notes

- 1 On Kuklinski, see Weiser (2019).
- 2 So Goleniewski describes himself in his 1984 publication *White Book*. The old-fashioned spelling of his name, with the use of 'Romanoff' instead of 'Romanov,' was his choice. As for Goleniewski, the name is pronounced 'Gole-nyef-ski.'
- 3 For this study, I have either translated directly or summarized Polish language texts. I have employed multiple on-line translators and dictionaries as well as a print Polish dictionary. I have further included the original Polish text in footnotes for critical passages.
- 4 In two relatively recent well researched biographies of the controversial former CIA official James Angleton, for example, Goleniewski's name does not appear in the index. See the Angleton biographies by Holzman (2008) and Morley (2017).
- 5 Tennent Bagley Archives, Box 11.
- 6 Bagley (2007), 49.
- 7 Villemarest (1984), 185.
- 8 Villemarest (2002), 111–12 (translated by author).
- 9 I refer to Czechoslovakia deliberately as these events preceded the separation of the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

# ABBREVIATIONS, ACRONYMS AND AGENCY NAMES

ACI	Anti-Communist International. (Small US-based far-right group)
Aufbau	'Reconstruction'. (Far-right grouping of anti-Bolshevik White Russians and German Nazis)
AW	Foreign Intelligence Agency (Poland 2002–present)
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BfV	Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Domestic security agency (Germany)
BND	Federal Intelligence Service (Germany)
CHEKA	Secret Police (Bolshevik Russia 1917–1922)
CE	Counter Espionage
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA 1947–present)
CIC	Counter Intelligence Corps
CP	Communist Party
CPCS	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DAC	Defenders of the American Constitution (Postwar far-right group based in USA)
DDR	German Democratic Republic aka East Germany
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation (USA)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany aka West Germany
GEE	The Government Employees' Exchange (Fringe anti-communist leak sheet, USA)
Gestapo	Secret State Police (Nazi Germany 1933–1945)
GRU	Military Intelligence Service (Soviet Union 1942–1991)
GZI	Main Directorate of Information (of the Polish Army)
HUAC	House Un-American Activities Committee (USA)
IS	Intelligence Service

JBS	John Birch Society. Anti-communist organization (USA 1958–present)
JTA	Jewish Telegraphic Agency
Kds. BP	Committee for Public Security (Poland)
KGB	Secret Service (Soviet Union 1954–1991)
KPP	Communist Party (Poland)
LWP	Polish People’s Army, the Communist controlled army in World War II
MBP	Ministry of Public Security (Poland)
MGB	Ministry of State Security (Soviet Union)
MI5	Security Service (UK)
MI6	Secret Intelligence Service (UK)
MON	Ministry of National Defense (Poland)
MSW	Ministry of the Interior (Poland)
MUBP	City (Municipal) Office of Public Security (Poland)
NKVD	Secret Service (Soviet Union 1934–1943)
NSC	National Security Council (USA 1952–present)
NSDAP	National Socialist German Workers’ Party (Nazi Germany 1920–1945)
NYJA	New York Journal-American
NYT	New York Times
OCB	Operations Coordinating Board (Executive to coordinate covert action, USA 1953–1961)
OGPU	Secret Service (Soviet Union 1922–1934)
OKHRANA	Secret Police (Tsarist Russia 1881–1917)
OSS	Office of Strategic Studies (WW2 intelligence agency and forerunner to CIA, USA 1942–1945)
OUN	Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists
PRC	People’s Republic of China
PRL	Polish People’s Republic
PUBP	District Office of Public Security (Poland)
PZPR	Polish United Workers Party (name of the Polish Communist Party after 1948)
ROCOR	The Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia
RSHA	‘Reich Main Security Office’ (Secret Police/Intelligence Agency, Nazi Germany 1939–45)
SIG-I	Senior Interagency Group-Intelligence (CIA)
SIS	Secret Intelligence Service aka MI6 (UK)
SMERSH	Military Counterintelligence (Soviet Union 1942–1946)
SOSJ	Sovereign Order of Saint John of Jerusalem (a fringe US chivalric order)
SD	Intelligence agency (Nazi Germany 1931–1945)
SS	Paramilitary organization (Nazi Germany 1925–1945)
SSD	State Security Service aka ‘Stasi’ (East Germany 1950–1990)
StB	State Security (Czechoslovakia)

TN	Tennessee
Trust	Name for operation by Bolshevik secret service to create a fake Monarchist organization
UB	Security Service (Poland)
UBP	(Regional) Office of Public Security for the MBP (Poland)
USIA	United States Information Agency
VFC	Volunteer Freedom Corps (American-backed anti-communist émigrés)
WiN	Freedom and Independence (Polish anti-Communist resistance organization)
WOP	Border Protection Army/Border Guards (Poland)
WOW	Court of the Warsaw Military District (Poland)
WSW	Polish Military Internal Service
WUBP	Provincial Office of Public Security (Poland)



Author Photograph

# INTRODUCTION

## Labyrinth

On 1 April 1958, April Fool's Day, the United States Embassy in Bern, Switzerland, received a mysterious envelope addressed to Ambassador Henry J. Taylor. Enclosed in a second envelope was a single-spaced typewritten letter in German addressed to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover. The letter's author offered to provide Hoover information on Soviet and East Bloc espionage operations under the strict understanding that the relationship between the source and the FBI would exclude the CIA. The note was cryptically signed 'Heckenschütze' ('Sniper'). Following protocol, Taylor promptly turned the mysterious missive over to the CIA.<sup>1</sup>

'Sniper' proved the cover name for a Polish Lieutenant Colonel named Michal Goleniewski.<sup>2</sup> Symbolic of Goleniewski's future troubled relations with the CIA, an even earlier overture of his to the United States was botched because the CIA couldn't understand what he was talking about. In 2005, a retired CIA agent named Ted Shackley wrote a memoir entitled *Spymaster: My Life in the CIA*. Shackley, who served in the CIA's Berlin station in the late 1950s, recalled the station receiving an odd communique from a 'mail intercept program' and signed by a name he recalled as 'Heckenschuss'.<sup>3</sup> As the text was filled with 'an impenetrable form of double talk,' it was simply filed away.

Berlin station was later contacted by a high-ranking CIA official named Howard Roman. A gifted linguist and close friend of CIA director Allen Dulles, Roman had formerly headed the CIA's Polish desk. He now inquired whether Berlin had received a cryptic message recently and was overjoyed when he learned about the peculiar dispatch.<sup>4</sup> Thus began one of the strangest stories of Cold War espionage.

In the early evening of 4 January 1960, the CIA finally met the man they knew only as Sniper when Goleniewski and his mistress Irmgard Kampf walked into the American Consulate in West Berlin. After an initial debrief in Frankfurt, Goleniewski was flown by military aircraft on 12 January 1961 to America. He now

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underwent an extensive interrogation by the CIA, first at a Maryland safe house and later in Virginia.

On 16 September 1961 the Agency and Goleniewski signed a contract that provided financial support, protection, and medical help for him for one year. On 5 March 1962, the CIA relocated Goleniewski and his now wife Irmgard to New York City. The CIA then renewed Goleniewski's contract for another year on 16 June 1962.

In 1963, however, Goleniewski began writing letters to President Kennedy and other government officials complaining about his treatment by the Agency. On 17 October 1963, the CIA and Goleniewski agreed on yet another written agreement. CIA debriefings with the former spy continued until 14 December 1963 when Goleniewski declared he was finished and broke contact with the Agency. The CIA then cancelled his newly negotiated contract on 14 January 1964.

During his tumultuous time in Virginia, Goleniewski met CIA Director Allan Dulles in a short formal meeting in Dulles's office. Goleniewski's stormy relationship to the Agency continued under Dulles's successor, John McCone. The CIA's historian David Robarge writes of this time:

Goleniewski had psychological problems, however, that emerged fully after he defected – notably his fanciful claim to be the last Russian tsarevich and heir to the Romanov name and fortune. Seized by this delusion and resentful at the treatment CIA officers had given him, Goleniewski stopped cooperating with debriefers in 1963, holed up in his New York apartment, refused to return a handgun the Agency had given him, and began writing long rambling letters to US government officials – among them the chairman of the House Immigration Subcommittee, the president, the attorney general, the FBI director, and the DCI. CIA renegotiated Goleniewski's contract in his favor in October 1963, and, when that incentive failed, took the opposite tack and suspended it in early 1964.<sup>5</sup>

As we will see, Goleniewski's post-CIA life was spent in the company of a range of figures on the far right of American politics. Not untypically for the far-right fringe, it was also filled with feuds, sectarianism and paranoia, as former friends became foes and often the targets of vitriolic screeds, rants and invective. He also willingly embraced and then published the most outlandish conspiracy theories and flights of fancy. Yet despite the increasingly unhinged nature of his public statements, Goleniewski was also capable of occasional moments of lucidity and rationality, particularly when discussing espionage and intelligence. In exploring his life, the contradictions and tensions between these two extremes are a constant feature.

Until his death on 2 July 1993 in Manhattan's Lenox Hill hospital, Goleniewski, his wife Irmgard, and their daughter Tatiana ('Tati') lived in a CIA-provided high-rise apartment building at 125–10 Queens Boulevard and 82<sup>nd</sup> Road, in Kew Gardens, just across from the Queens County Criminal Court. It remains a placid middle-class neighborhood with a Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) connection just a few blocks away.

From his apartment sanctuary, the 'King of Queens' in 1975 began issuing a truly bizarre monthly newsletter entitled *Double Eagle*.<sup>6</sup> Shoddily produced, often type-written with cross outs and corrections written in by hand, and at times even hard to read, it remains utterly obscure, so obscure that WorldCat lists exactly three libraries in the world that even retain copies of *Double Eagle*.<sup>7</sup>

*Double Eagle*'s obscurity is understandable since in its pages Goleniewski enumerated some truly bizarre claims. One of the most notorious concerned Guy Richards, a former *New York Journal-American* (NYJA) reporter. In March 1964, Richards penned a series of front-page articles about Goleniewski. After interviewing Goleniewski, in 1966 Richards published a sympathetic book on him entitled *Imperial Agent: The Goleniewski–Romanov Case*. By the time the book came out, Goleniewski had had a bitter falling out with Richards.

Goleniewski's most incredible attack on Richards appeared in the August 1976 issue of *Double Eagle* under the title 'Double Eagle versus SS Order under Death's Head.' Here Goleniewski *proves* via 'photographic evidence' that Guy Richards was Reinhard Heydrich, the Nazi leader assassinated in Prague in June 1942. Goleniewski claimed the assassination was faked and that Heydrich had secretly been brought to the United States. Heydrich was now living as 'Guy Richards.' Goleniewski later explained:

In result of my first few contacts with Guy Richards in 1964, I had been warned by some knowledgeable individuals in the United States to be vigilant in cooperation with Richards because in reality he was the defector from Hitler's SS, Chief of Staff of the Security Main Office of the Third Reich (RSHA), the SS General Reinhard Heydrich. ... Since 1975, I published in my Bulletin *Double Eagle* a series of reports concerning SS General Heydrich and other Nazi criminals hiding in the United States by Soviet-British arrangement and protection. In result of my justified attacks against 'Richards,' he undertook steps which had been planned to coax me into silence forever ... on May 10, 1976 (i.e., 3 years before he died), Guy Richards filed with the Criminal Court of the City of New York a Complaint against me, as Editor and Publisher of the Bulletin *Double Eagle*.<sup>8</sup>

In another issue of the *Double Eagle*, Goleniewski devotes most of the text to a glowing review of an obscure 1980 book entitled *The New Dark Ages Conspiracy* published by the Lyndon LaRouche cult.<sup>9</sup> Fulsomely praising the book's expose of a vast British conspiracy to destroy world civilization, Goleniewski's review was entitled 'Britain's Plot to Destroy Civilization.' Goleniewski also used yet more 'photographic evidence' to demonstrate that 'Jack the Ripper' was really the Duke of Clarence. Instead of dying in 1892, the Duke was secretly taken to Germany where he now became the person we know as Adolf Hitler. Jack/Adolf safely returned to England in 1945; in 1980 he was still alive at the ripe old age of 126!

Goleniewski had been on the Ripper's case at least since 1977 when his writings proved too much for a far-right pundit named Revilo P. Oliver who now mocked



him (anonymously) in the April 1977 issue of the racist journal *Instauration*.<sup>10</sup> A classics professor who taught Indo-European languages, Oliver was a hard-core antisemite. A founding member of the anti-communist John Birch Society (JBS), Oliver was expelled from the organization in the mid-1960s for his extremist views.<sup>11</sup> Because the Birchers embraced Goleniewski's claim that Henry Kissinger was employed by the KGB, Oliver used Goleniewski's ramblings to expose JBS leader Robert Welch as a buffoon. Oliver returned to Goleniewski in the January 1991 issue of the far-right publication *Liberty Bell*. Here he recalled of *Double Eagle*: 'The periodical was chiefly noteworthy for the phenomenal credulity of its subscribers.' From Oliver's *Liberty Bell* examination of *Double Eagle*:

That wicked man, Adolf Hitler, weren't no German or Austrian. As his handwriting shows, he was an Englishman, none other than the man who was famous in 1888 as Jack the Ripper, and, what is more, he was probably the Duke of Clarence, eldest son of King Edward VII. This is proved by a photograph of Queen Elizabeth II, whose features show shock and horror, according to His Imperial Highness, at the mere mention of the dastardly Duke of Clarence. Now if this identification is correct, Hitler was eighty-one at the time of his (faked?) death in Berlin, but, as his Imperial Highness explains, his wickedness enabled him to retain his vim and vigor to an advanced age, so that he could advance Sir Francis Bacon's scheme for a 'Pagan British Empire.'

Nor was the outlaw Jesse James safe from Goleniewski:

If you think that Jesse James was just an American bandit, that shows how ignorant you are. He was a high officer of 'the Rosicrucians' Order under the Death's Head,' an early version of the German S.S. Having been taught 'second sight' and how to 'go out of Body' separating his astral body from his physical body by a 'gifted' Negress owned by his parents, he joined the 'British Secret Intelligence Service' and advanced Francis Bacon's 'Divine Plan for a Pagan British Empire' by becoming one of the richest men in the world, and living 'seventy-three incredible lives' under as many different names, for which lack of space forces me to refer you to His Imperial Highness. I need not add that the assassination of Jesse James in 1882 was just another hoax staged by the International Bankers. Whether Jesse is still flourishing, the Czar coyly sayeth not. Come to think of it, he may be Nelson Rockefeller.<sup>12</sup>

Goleniewski believed Queen Elizabeth and Lord Mountbatten sabotaged his claim to the Russian throne. In the November 1980 issue of *Double Eagle*, he quotes from an article he first published in February 1976. Entitled 'British Bandits, Thieves, and Prostitutes,' it contained 'a short report about the Task of Bankers' Magicians: To Make U.S. Disappear' that read:

there is a long way during this century in the task of the British oligarchy and of the Bankers' magicians to abolish the United States Constitution and to dissolve the Great Republic. It is a process during which for six decades humanity has been suffering the horrors of Marxian Communism, the dialectical anti-thesis of which, indeed, National Socialism was and is. This infamous system of repression as the Bankers' vehicle to conquer the World and to establish a global tyranny is without a doubt the most inimical and criminal system that man has known for thousands of years of dramatic history.

Yet Goleniewski remained capable of rational discourse when discussing the world of espionage. In September 1980, the same month Goleniewski propounded his unique brand of Ripperology alongside his encomium to the LaRouchies, the well-known journalist and espionage author Edward Jay Epstein introduced him to the readers of the *New York Times* magazine in a famous article entitled 'Spy Wars.'

In his 28 September 1980 story, Epstein framed Goleniewski's saga as part of a larger CIA debate over Soviet 'moles' and 'false defectors,' especially one Soviet defector named Yuri Nosenko. It was here that Epstein wrote: 'Goleniewski had been the most productive agent in the entire history of the CIA, revealing more than a dozen Soviet moles....'

The article proved a first draft for Epstein's 1989 book *Deception: The Invisible War between the KGB and CIA*. Epstein's 1978 book *Legend* explored Lee Harvey Oswald's possible ties to the KGB.<sup>13</sup> While researching *Legend*, Epstein met James Angleton, the CIA's former head of Counterintelligence who led Epstein even more deeply into the mirror world of spies and traitors.

With his advance for *Deception*, Epstein opened a research office at 217 Broadway not far from City Hall that he dubbed the Center for Research on International Deception. He now began interviewing former spies and defectors, including Goleniewski, whom he saw on a regular basis.<sup>14</sup> In May 1981, some seven months after 'Spy Wars,' Epstein published a long profile on Goleniewski syndicated through the Independent News Alliance. Epstein presented him in a sympathetic light even while acknowledging his claim to be the Czar.<sup>15</sup> Epstein's true interest, however, was in Goleniewski's spook world past.

Epstein's profile marked the last serious press coverage of Goleniewski, who again sank into near total obscurity. When 'Alexei' finally died in 1993, the only mention of his name in the *New York Times* was a small paid obituary notice, surely a curious end for someone who single-handedly destroyed Polish intelligence, exposed Soviet control over West Germany's spy service, and saved Britain's MI6 spy agency from certain catastrophe.

## Notes

- 1 One CIA official who served as 'desk officer' in Washington for the Sniper letters was Richards Heuer, then a member of the CIA's Operations Directorate. See Heuer (1987), 389. Heuer recalls (413), 'I had been the Headquarters desk officer on the Goleniewski

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case at the time we received both of his reports, the one on the penetration of CIA and the one that led to identification of Felfe as a KGB penetration of West German intelligence. I had also seen firsthand how much damage a well-placed penetration, such as Goleniewski, could do to an opposition service.'

- 2 Martin (1980), 95. Martin misdates the letter's composition to March 1959; the CIA's Tennent ('Pete') Bagley copies Martin when he writes in *Spy Wars* that Goleniewski's first letter arrived in 'April 1959.' Bagley (2007), 48. Bagley later corrected his error. See Bagley (2015), 21.

Other reports say the letter was postmarked in Zurich. See Massie (1996), 149; Bagley (2007), 48. William J. Gill claims that the first contact began 'early in 1958 when a packet of letters was tossed over the wall of the US embassy in Berne, Switzerland.' See Gill (1969), 211.

- 3 'Heckenschütze' literally means something like 'shooting behind a hedge/hedgerow,' with the notion of shooting from a concealed position.
- 4 Shackley (2005), 26. During his time in the Polish secret service, Goleniewski frequently visited Berlin. He tried to contact the US there. When that failed, he next reached out to Bern. Goleniewski's would-be biographer Guy Richards reports, as does no one else, that Goleniewski first sent a telegram to Taylor in Bern 'to be on the lookout' for an important 'Heckenschütze' communique. Next, 'the finished produce was then delivered to the US Consulate in West Berlin with the request that it be forwarded by diplomatic courier to Bern. An employee in the consulate gave assurances that it would be.' Was this a different version of the incident Shackley mentioned? Richards (1966), 134.
- 5 Robarge (2015), 320.
- 6 The first issue appeared in January 1975. See Confidential Intelligence Report of the *Herald of Freedom*, March 1975 p. 4 which was produced by Goleniewski supporter Frank Capell. *Double Eagle's* 'mission statement' in each issue was 'DOUBLE EAGLE IS A MONTHLY BULLETIN focusing on selected matters from the past and present. It is the only self-edited publication issued under the auspices of H.I.H., the Heir to All-Russian Imperial Throne, Tsarevich and Grand Duke Aleksei Nicholaevich Romanoff of Russia, the August Ataman and Head of the Russian Imperial House of Romanoff; also known under the cover-identity of Colonel 'Michael M. Goleniewski', renowned for his support of the national security of the United States and its Western allies.'
- 7 I managed to locate about ten issues myself.
- 8 Goleniewski, *White Book*, 82.
- 9 *Double Eagle*, September 1980, 6/9; White (1980). For more on LaRouche, see 'Hylozoic Hedgehog' and Sweet (2019).
- 10 Anonymous (1977). The article was later reproduced with Oliver named as the author in other extreme-right publications. See *National Vanguard*, 19 September 2015.
- 11 For a standard scholarly history of JBS, see Mulloy (2014). See also the valuable resources and analysis collected by independent researcher Ernie Lazar <https://sites.google.com/site/ernie124102/home>
- 12 Goleniewski drew on an obscure 1975 self-published book by Del Schrader entitled *Jessie James Was One of His Names: The Greatest Cover Up in History by the Famous Outlaw Who Lived 73 Incredible Lives*. Also see <https://www.genealogy.com/forum/surnames/topics/james/36329/>.
- 13 On *Legend*, also see Coogan (2015).
- 14 Goleniewski, however, is only mentioned in *Deception* in a brief research acknowledgment.
- 15 Epstein's article, for example, was picked up in 17 May 1981 issue of *The Washington Star* and the 29 May 1981 *Hartford Courant*.