

# "Der Spiegel: Confirmation from the East"

Counter Culture Contribution by Brian Crozier

I WELCOME Sir James Goldsmith's offer of hospitality in the pages of COUNTER CULTURE to bring fresh news on a struggle in which we were both involved. On the attacking side was Herr Rudolf Augstein, publisher of the German news magazine, Der Spiegel; on the defending side was Jimmy. My own involvement was twofold: I provided him with the explosive information that drew fire from Augstein, and I co-ordinated a truly massive international research campaign that caused Augstein, nearly four years later, to call off his libel suit against Jimmy.<sup>1</sup>

History moves fast these days. The collapse of communism in the ex-Soviet Union and eastern Europe has loosened tongues and opened archives. The struggle I mentioned took place between January 1981 and October 1984. The past two years have brought revelations and confessions that further vindicate the line we took a decade ago.

What did Jimmy Goldsmith say, in 1981, that roused Augstein to take legal action? The Media Committee of the House of Commons had invited Sir James to deliver an address on 'Subversion in the Media'. Having read a reference to the 'Spiegel affair' of 1962 in an interview with the late Franz Josef Strauss in his own news magazine of that period, NOW!, he wanted to know more. I was the interviewer.

Today's readers, even in Germany, may not automatically react to the sight or sound of the 'Spiegel affair', but in its day, this was a major political scandal, which seriously damaged the political career of Franz Josef Strauss, the then West German Defence Minister. When Der Spiegel, in October 1962, published details of a secret N.A.T.O. exercise, the Chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, ordered the arrest of Rudolf Augstein and his editor, Konrad Ahlers. Charges against them were later dropped, but Adenauer allowed the blame to fall on Strauss, whom he sacked.

In 1977, a senior defector from the Czechoslovak secret service, General Jan Sejna, revealed that the whole 'scandal' had been masterminded by the Soviet K.G.B. His revelation was published in various quarters, including the American conservative magazine, National Review. Having studied the case, I suggested that Jimmy should refer to the case in his House of Commons speech. He did, saying that the Spiegel affair had been 'orchestrated by the K.G.B.'.

Augstein had ignored previous public references to the K.G.B.'s role, but Sir James Goldsmith was a more tempting target, and Augstein issued a writ against him. Over the next few years, on contract to Jimmy, I accumulated a vast amount of corroborative evidence. There were exhaustive talks with Sejna, and with the important K.G.B. defector Ilya Dzhirkvelov, who also had knowledge of the Spiegel exercise. Jimmy met both men and probed them further. We also held a series of meetings with the other principal defectors from Soviet bloc intelligence.

As Chief of Staff to the Defence Minister, Sejna had seen K.G.B. instructions to the Czechoslovak secret service, the StB, to obtain secret N.A.T.O. documents and use them to discredit Strauss, thus blocking the very real possibility, at that time, that he would succeed the aged Adenauer as Chancellor. The K.G.B. had real reasons for trying to stop Strauss, who had taken an uncompromisingly anti-communist line on relations with the Soviet Union.

As for Dzhirkvelov, he too had relevant things to say. In 1960, at a meeting in Moscow chaired by Boris Ponomarev, head of the Soviet party's International Department, he had been instructed to spread hostile disinformation about Strauss. The line he took was to tell

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<sup>1</sup> See Counter Culture Vol. 2, p. 99-105

German journalists that Strauss was paid by the American C.I.A. and was more interested in getting rich than in serving Germany.

I am told that in such libel cases, defence lawyers have been known to let the plaintiff's team know that they have some unassailable witnesses on their side. Whether or not this was true in this case, I know not. At all events, in September 1984, a month before the trial was due to open, Augstein said he was ready to drop his action, on condition that the defendants made it clear that he was not 'controlled by the K.G.B.'. Indeed, Sir James had never said he was.

Together, we drafted a personal statement which Jimmy placed in full-page advertisements in major dailies in Britain, West Germany and the United States.<sup>2</sup> The text described the agreed statement that had brought the case to a close as 'a famous victory for the defence of the West against its main enemy, Soviet imperialism'. And indeed it was, in those days, not all that long ago, before the collapse of the U.S.S.R.

So, what do we now know that we didn't know in the early 1980s? There have been two major revelations, each of high interest. Had these facts been known, it is fair to speculate that Rudolf Augstein would never have sued Sir James Goldsmith.

The first came in *Der Spiegel* itself, in the issue dated 17 December 1990, which 'sheepishly admitted' (in the words of *The Times* the following day) that the magazine's East Berlin bureau chief was an agent for the East German security service, known as the Stasi. His mission, as one might expect, was to disseminate disinformation through the columns of the magazine.

The bureau chief, Diethelm Schroder, had been called in for questioning and accused of passing military and political information to the East Germans. Before moving to East Berlin, Schroder had been *Der Spiegel*'s military specialist. As such, he is reported to have been a close friend of N.A.T.O.'s secretary-general, Manfred Worner.

Was Rudolf Augstein, then, unaware of the Stasi connection, as he had claimed in 1984? I don't know the answer, and it is quite possible that he had no idea of Schroder's deeper role in his entourage. In its issue of 17 December, *Der Spiegel* had this to say:

“Only now, three months after unification, is it becoming clear that the long arm of the Stasi reached not only into the offices of ministries but into almost all social circles of the Federal Republic of Germany.”

Diethelm Schroder was not working for *Der Spiegel* at the time of the Strauss affair. However, since that revelation, a more sweeping admission has come from a former senior officer of the K.G.B., General Oleg Kalugin. By now, Kalugin is a kind of celebrity in the West, having appeared in public or on television in several countries. For speaking his mind in public a couple of years ago, he was fired as head of Soviet counter-intelligence and lost his pension and his medals. However, as a newly elected People's Deputy, he was immune from prosecution.

As it happens, I met Kalugin in November 1991 at a conference in Potsdam. In a telephone call to his Moscow office the other day, I checked what he was reported to have said some months earlier.

It was indeed a sensational statement: 'I can say that for many years, *Der Spiegel* had put its columns at the disposal of the K.G.B. for disinformation purposes.' I had first read these words in French in the March 1992 issue of the long established Paris review of communist affairs, *Est & Ouest*.

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<sup>2</sup> The advertisement appeared in London in *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and *Financial Times*; in the U.S. in the *New York Times*, *Wall Street Journal* and *Washington Post*; and in German in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and *Die Welt*. It was turned down by *The Guardian* (London), *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (Zurich) and *Die Zeit* (Hamburg).

On inquiring about the author, I learned that this quotation had appeared in the Swiss equivalent of Est & Ouest, ZeitBild, published in Bern. I spoke to the author, one Jurg Steinacher, who referred me to his original source: an article in the Hamburg daily, Die Zeit. He kindly Faxed me a copy of the original source, in that newspaper on 8 November 1991. I failed to reach the author, Christian Schmidt-Hauer, who was traveling, and wrote to him, but he did not reply.

There was a problem, in that all three publications had presented slightly different versions of the circumstances in which Kalugin had made his statement. It was impossible to tell whether he had been addressing the Soviet parliament, or being interviewed on television, and if the latter, whether it had been Soviet or German T.V. My problem was that the number Kalugin had given me didn't work.

At last I obtained the right number and we had a helpful chat. He confirmed that he had indeed been correctly quoted, although he had neither addressed the Soviet parliament on this matter nor been interviewed on television. In fact, he had made his charge against Der Spiegel twice. The first occasion was immediately after the failed hard line coup of August 1991, which had provoked the fall of Mikhail Gorbachev and brought Boris Yeltsin to power. On that occasion, Kalugin had told a press conference what he knew about the Spiegel connection.

He had been approached by Der Spiegel itself, at the time of the Potsdam conference, to check his words, and had confirmed them.

Although Kalugin had long known of the connection his employers had so cleverly exploited in 1962, he had not been involved in that particular operation. But he did know that the columns of the magazine were available to the K.G.B. The question remains: did Rudolf Augstein know? And if so, when did he learn the truth?

An exhaustive search through the files of Der Spiegel since Kalugin spoke has failed to find a reference to what he said to the magazine, and to the wider German press. It would seem that the Diethelm Schroder story was as much as Spiegel could swallow.

Embarrassment has its limits.