

## Mitrokhin, Vasily, ed. KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook. London: Frank Cass, 2002.

Harold V. Cordry

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Mitrokhin, Vasily, ed. *KGB Lexicon: The Soviet Intelligence Officer's Handbook*. London: Frank Cass, 2002.

For 12 years Vasily Mitrokhin, a senior archivist in charge of the KGB's foreign-intelligence archive, surreptitiously copied top-secret documents and assembled a clandestine archive of his own. It documented the crimes against the Soviet people perpetrated by the Soviet system and more particularly by the KGB, crimes which had distressed Mitrokhin so profoundly when he read of them that he resolved to expose them at any cost. As he labored to achieve his goal he would live in constant fear of discovery but always with the hope that somehow he would manage ultimately to escape to the West with his massive archive and turn it over to the CIA.

When the time arrived, however, the CIA rebuffed him(!), and instead it was British intelligence that exfiltrated Mitrokhin and his family, along with his archive, which MI6 is reportedly sharing with other Western intelligence services.

The first book based on material from the Mitrokhin archive was *The Sword and the Shield* (1999), co-authored by Mitrokhin and Christopher Andrew, a Cambridge University historian who specializes in Soviet intelligence and who also worked with an earlier KGB defector, Oleg Gordievsky. A vast hodgepodge of revelations, both major and minor, it addresses some of the issues and events about which Mitrokhin felt a pressing urgency to make public, among them the regime's treatment of the dissidents, the Cold War period, the harassment of Boris Pasternak, the crushing of the Prague Spring, and the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

*KGB Lexicon* is quite different – literally, in its substance, a dictionary of KGB terminology. On the most superficial level it provides names for all the discrete acts involved in espionage as it was conducted by the KGB. Its true value, however, lies in what may be inferred from the definitions, for they readily yield the procedural guidelines to be followed by intelligence officer – the rulebook, as Peter Hennessy puts it, that allows access to the KGB's inner mind – to the values, attitudes, and principles by which the KGB operated. The KGB itself recognized the lexicon's importance in this regard. Copies were numbered and their circulation was strictly controlled.

Entries in the version prepared by Mitrokhin are sorted into two sections, as is the KGB original: intelligence and counter-intelligence. Headwords are in transliterated Russian followed by an English translation. Here are two examples:

**Metod spetsialnogo pozitivnogo vozdeystviya –  
the method of special positive pressure**

A method of conducting active measures used by KGB external Intelligence in order to exert influence on governments, parties, or individual political and public figures by carrying out measures of various forms and content through agents and confidential contacts within the legal framework of the target country.

**Deystvuyushchiy rezerv – the active reserve**

A special KGB cadre comprising intelligence officers who are sent out to work in foreign countries, or within the Soviet Union, under cover of various institutions.

The index, also, is divided into two sections, one listing transliterated Russian headwords and the other listing the headwords in English. If one were to wish for a third index it would be for a conventional topical listing, which would more readily identify categories and facilitate the discovery of connections and the making of generalizations.

To complain of a flaw of this nature, however, seems petty as one browses these pages from Mitrokhin's Archive, filled with information that was classified as top secret even within the organization that produced it.

In the beginning, Mitrokhin was a good communist. In this sense perhaps he is still a good communist; but at his advanced age, when he speaks of communism in positive terms he is recalling the earliest years of the Soviet period, when "[t]he Bolshevik Revolution began by robbing and wiping out a wealthy minority in the interests of a poor majority," and before it "ended by robbing and humiliating the poor majority in favor of a new criminal wealthy minority."

"The Cheka," he says, having "metamorphosed into the fighting unit of hard-core nationalism built on political intrigue, is now in the service of the nouveaux riches, the bankers, capitalists and exploiters, waiting hand and foot on the Mafiosi class of oligarchs."

The old order is no more, to be sure, but the Chekists typically are not among the victims of such quiet transitions, nor were they extirpated in the weeks that followed the end of the Soviet system. Most of them have simply changed their uniforms and put away the old red ribbons; one of them, notably, has become Russia's president.

So, as Mitrokhin remarks, although it might seem that a new order would have no reason to retain secret documents from its predecessor, this one does not appear inclined to throw open its archives. Nor does Mitrokhin expect it to do so.

Harold V. Cordry  
Baldwin, KS