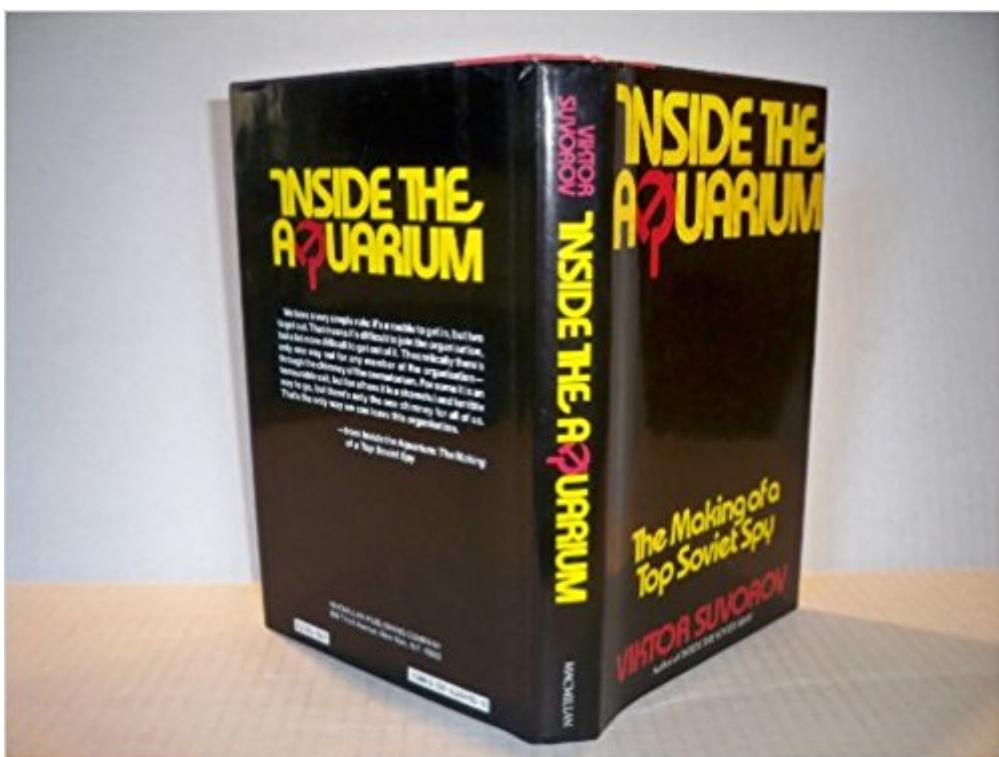


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# Inside The Aquarium: The Making Of A Top Soviet Spy



## **Synopsis**

Inside the Aquarium: The Making of a Top Soviet Spy by Viktor Suvorov (1986)

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

Readers of the author's Inside Soviet Intelligence will be further enlightened by this brisk, readable account of his recruitment and training as an agent of Russia's ultra-secret GRU intelligence group. Suvorov, a tank-company commander when he was selected for army spy work, recounts his early low-level days as an officer in various posts (tracking NATO troop movements, working with saboteurs, etc.), then describes his three years at the GRU's secret training academy in Moscow and subsequent assignments at the agency's headquarters (the "Aquarium") and as an agent in Vienna and elsewhere. Suvorov, who now lives in England, recalls the testing and screening by stern, ruthless superiors, and offers many insights into Soviet information-gathering abroad. Conservative Book Club dual main selection; BOMC alternate. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Another revelation from this well-known Soviet defector (author of Inside the Soviet Army and Inside Soviet Intelligence), this time on Soviet military intelligence, the GRU ("Aquarium" is its headquarters). The story begins with Suvorov's recruitment into military intelligence, carries through his training as a spy and posting to the Soviet embassy in Vienna, and ends with his defection to the British. The book is easy to read, giving considerable detail on how Soviet military intelligence work is done and on the training of Soviet special forces troops. Only intelligence insiders can evaluate

the accuracy of the material here; for the rest of us, this is an interesting account of Soviet spycraft. For most libraries. BOMC alternate; Conservative Book Club dual main selection. Edward Gibson, James Madison Univ. Lib., Harrisonburg, Va. Copyright 1986 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Viktor Suvorov's brilliant memoir of his life and times as an agent of the Soviet Union's military intelligence directorate known by its acronym, GRU, was an instant Cold War classic when first published as simply *Aquarium* in Great Britain in 1985. When published in the USA in 1986 as *Inside the Aquarium: The Making of a Top Soviet Spy*, it was a best-seller. Experts were divided on Suvorov at the time. Many suspected his books were fabrications, disinformation of some kind purposely released on the West by the Soviets using a double-agent; or the work of a British misinformation campaign to make the Soviets look like the evil empire then US President Ronald Reagan had declared them to be. This controversy was enhanced by the secrecy surrounding Suvorov himself. As a young intelligence officer during this time period, I thought the Suvorov books genuine. Years have passed, the Soviet Union is gone, the Cold War gave way to the "War on Terror" and Suvorov, no longer in hiding, is still writing and lecturing as an expert in Cold War era Russian history. And his memoir, *Inside the Aquarium*, has survived the test of time. It's a brilliant classic of life inside a totalitarian nightmare. In fact, this book is so well-written it should stand alongside other dystopian classics like Orwell's *1984* or Huxley's *Brave New World*. And as Russian literature, it's as good as anything by Chekhov or Solzhenitsyn. Suvorov (Real Name: Vladimir Bogdanovich Rezun) wrote several insider books on the Soviet military in the late 1980s, but *Inside the Aquarium* remains his best and most personal of the series. In the 1990s he began publishing a series of behind-the-scenes books on the origins of World War II and the secret machinations of the communist leaders of the Soviet Union in the post-war era. Many of these are popular in the former Warsaw Pact and in Russia. Not all of these books are well-received in the West, despite Suvorov's background and research. They simply are too revelatory for American and Western European readers who have been spoon-fed their history in small sugary doses. He has recently published a series of fiction novels for Eastern European and Russian readers. He is a fantastic writer and I wish his novels could be translated for an English reading audience soon. In the meantime, if you have never read *Inside the Aquarium*, please get it. You won't be let down. This book needs to be rediscovered by a new audience as the classic memoir of personal survival inside one of the most totalitarian systems ever devised by mankind. Highly, highly recommended.

recommended reading for those w/a Gov't Security Clearance - and those would appreciate a

realistic understanding of the inner workings of the USSR - circa some years ago - and why - it was written - by a former Very High - Russian Military Officer two companion Books: about their Tank Cops & one other [i forgot the title']

This was a profoundly disturbing book. Suvorov traces his career from his assignment as a lieutenant commanding a company of tanks in the Soviet 13th Army, through being promoted into military intelligence, then being picked for the Spetsnaz, and finally winding up as a GRU spy in the Soviet embassy in Vienna. Along the way he gives us an unparalleled vista of the bankruptcy of the Soviet system. The view he gives of the GRU is instructive. It was a military intelligence organization that demanded the absolute loyalty and total domination of its secretive minions. The metaphor that most fits is that of selling one's soul to the devil for your thirty minutes of power and privilege.

Suvorov openly admits that he loved the power and privilege he had as a member of the Nomenklatura, of which he was a part by virtue of his association with the GRU. The acquisition and exercise of power were the factors that motivated him, by his own testimony. In the GRU, every one was being watched and everyone was watching someone else. The lives of the agents were dominated by fear of failure, fear of mistakes, and fear of exposure--but not exposure to the other side so much as exposure to the GRU itself. Perhaps the most telling example the author provides is of an assignment he was given by a GRU superior to drop a package containing a bible into a fellow GRU agent's apartment mailbox, an agent known to be Suvorov's friend. The agent was being tested. His only possible correct response was to immediately report that he'd received a bible in the mail (I can not imagine living under such petty reporting requirements). If he failed to make the report he would be accused of having an interest in religion (subversive indeed!) and would be evacuated from Vienna to the Aquarium, GRU headquarters at Khodinka airfield in Moscow, where he would be executed. While Suvorov was delivering the package he was tempted to warn his friend to make the report. He decided against doing so, realizing that he himself was known to be the man's friend and was himself also under surveillance. As he made the drop, it dawned on Suvorov that this was as much a test for him as it was for his friend. Would he be loyal to the GRU, even though he would be condemning his friend to death, or would his friendship win out? Suvorov survived; his friend failed to make the requisite report, and was condemned. It was a group which devoured its own. In such an organization, you quickly learned to trust no one, and to subvert all loves and loyalties to the overriding demands of the GRU. True friendship was impossible; it could get you killed. It was a soulless system, officially and aggressively atheistic, with no moral good other than the good of the State itself, as defined by the corrupt individuals who had happened to

claw their way to the top of the mountain of bodies at the moment. "I serve the Soviet Union!" was the obligatory response to any praise or commendation. I read the book as part of my research for my novel, Falcon Down, in which the GRU plays a significant part. It was a valuable exercise, and I gained much useful information. Aquarium is an interesting read, though you want to wash your hands when you put the book down. One thing the book left me with was a renewed understanding of what the closed Soviet society became, especially for the upper class. The brutality of the Soviet system, combined with an official atheism able to offer no moral constraints, no meaning, and no hopes beyond the personal acquisition of power and privilege, nearly ruined a beautiful country and a vibrant people. Suvorov's Soviet Union became a real-life Lord of the Flies experience. One can only hope that some day Russia will come into its own as a prosperous, free, and happy country.

I have read much of Viktor Suvorov's work, and this remains my favorite. This book is an excellent view into the inner workings of the better of the Soviet Intelligence Services. Many people don't realize that it was the GRU, rather than the much vaunted KGB, that stole the best intelligence on the Atomic Bomb; given the caliber of their personnel, and their training, it is little surprise that they had the successes they did, and further little surprise that our DIA has now created its own Defense Clandestine Service to supplement the work of the CIA's HUMINT personnel, and that of other source intelligence.

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