

A tale of two spies

The two spies we're going to speak mainly about today aren't Andrej Babiš and Petr Pavel, but rather two Russians that many readers will have never heard of, Dimitri Simes and Yuri Shvets. They were both born in the Soviet Union but have been U.S. citizens for many decades. Their tale is one that applies generally to U.S.-Russian relations but that also touches on the final days of the Czech presidential elections.

But first a short detour to speak about Oleg Deripaska. He's one of the best-known Russian oligarchs in the CR, partly because of his business association with Petr Kellner of PPF and their fight for control of Ingosstrakh insurer. Deripaska was in the news this week because a former senior FBI agent who allegedly worked for him, Charles McGonigal, was indicted by the [U.S. Dept. of Justice](#) for violating economic sanctions against Russia in response to its aggression in Ukraine. McGonigal's alleged crime was to agree to provide services to Deripaska, who is under U.S. sanctions. The [Czech media](#) widely reported McGonigal's case.

What interests us most about this isn't Deripaska, McGonigal or the alleged crimes, but rather a statement by the U.S. Dept. of Justice: "After sanctions are imposed, they must be enforced equally against all U.S. citizens in order to be successful. There are no exceptions for anyone, including a former FBI official like Mr. McGonigal."

This brings us to Dimitri Simes. He's a board member and the president emeritus of the [Center for the National Interest](#), which includes Henry Kissinger as its

honorary chairman, insurance man Maurice Greenberg as its chairman emeritus, and former [Amb. to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad](#) and many other prominent

who is a Russian MP. Simes, a U.S. citizen, hosts a regular show on a sanctioned Russian TV station and more-or-less supports Russian foreign policy on the show.

And now the really interesting part. [Yuri Shvets](#), whom we mentioned at the beginning, claims that Simes is the [longest-serving Soviet/Russian agent in Washington](#). Shvets, an ex-KGB agent who now serves as a security adviser and attracts a million viewers per day to his [Russian-language YouTube site](#), claims that Simes was [infiltrated into the U.S. by Yevgeny Primakov](#) of his (Shvets's) own department of the KGB. As far as we can tell, Simes has never publicly disputed this.

In one of his shows this week, Simes interviewed a retired Russian general, Evgeny Buzhinsky, who said ([at about 8m and then 12m](#), in Russian only) that if Nato countries send F-16 fighters to Ukraine and base them out of Poland and Romania, these two countries will become legitimate targets, and their bases should be attacked by Russia. Then it would be up to the U.S. to decide whether it wanted a nuclear war with Russia, he said.

Lockheed Martin announced this week that it's [ramping up F-16 production](#) in case Ukraine's allies decide to [send in jets](#). You see where this [creeping escalation](#) might be headed? F-16s are used to attack Russian positions, and Russia attacks the air bases in Poland or Romania. Czechs then rush to help their Nato allies under Article 5, as promised this week.

But where would the CR send its troops? To Poland? Romania? Ukraine? Russia? The Czech spies and their spymasters leave this key question hanging.



people on its [board](#) and [advisory council](#). Simes emigrated to the U.S. in 1973, worked at the [Center for Strategic & International Studies](#), and was an assistant to ex-Pres. Richard Nixon. He was also the founding editor of [The National Interest](#) magazine (which we mentioned here in [Aug. 2015](#), [May 2019](#) and [June 2020](#)), where he recently wrote about "[How to Avoid Nuclear War over Ukraine](#)."

Because of his connection with the Trump campaign, his name figures prominently in the [Mueller Report on the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election](#). Now he's the co-host of the [Big Game debate show](#) on Russian state TV's [Channel One](#), which is [under sanction](#) by the U.S. government. So is Simes' co-host, [Vyacheslav Nikonov](#)