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To cite this article: Huw Dylan & Alan Burton (2023) 'An anarchy of treason': public history, insider knowledge and the early spy novels of John le Carré, *Intelligence and National Security*, 38:6, 902-919, DOI: [10.1080/02684527.2023.2225934](https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2023.2225934)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2023.2225934>



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Published online: 03 Jul 2023.



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ARTICLE



'An anarchy of treason': public history, insider knowledge and the early spy novels of John le Carré

Huw Dylan  and Alan Burton

ABSTRACT

John le Carré is credited with re-defining spy fiction into something widely considered as more 'authentic'. His work emerged during a period replete with spy scandals and public investigations. This article considers the intersection of the public history of intelligence with le Carré's early novels, particularly *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. It reveals how the author drew creatively on that public history to shape his narratives and underpin the mood of his stories. Finally, it probes the 'insider knowledge' in the stories, illustrating that, contrary to le Carré's protestations, there exists a demonstrable correspondence between fact and fiction.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 9 Mar 2023

Accepted 12 Jun 2023

KEYWORDS

John le Carré; spy fiction; 'novels of treachery'; public history; British intelligence; East Germany; Stasi

Introduction

'The British security services will long remember 1961 as a year which saw them often where they hate most to be – on the daily newspapers' front pages'. Such were the words of an American observer of the intelligence scene in Britain in the early 1960s; overall judging it 'A Bad Year for England'.¹ 1961 had witnessed the exposure of the Portland spy ring and of George Blake of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), both having tirelessly leaked secrets to the Soviets for some years. A shocked yet curious public was readily offered up details. Though the trial of George Blake was typically held *in camera*, and the press and its readership were left to wonder what the convicted agent could have done to merit 42 years of imprisonment, the longest sentence in modern British history, interest was fed by *Traitor Betrayed: The True Story of George Blake* (1962), written by E.H. Cookridge, an established commentator on espionage with good contacts in the secret world. The trial of the Portland spies in March 1961 was, unusually, held in open court, and the unprecedented access to an active spy case instantly resulted in three detailed accounts, John Bulloch and Henry Miller's *Spy Ring: The Full Story of the Naval Secrets Case*, Arthur Tietjen's *Soviet Spy Ring*, and Comer Clarke's *The War Within* (all 1961), and even more surprisingly the documentary-style feature film *Ring of Spies* (1963).²

1961 had also quietly seen the publication of a small espionage novel, *Call for the Dead*, by the new author John le Carré. His next spy story, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, 2 years later, un-heroic, downbeat and cynical, and an outstanding commercial and critical success, transformed spy fiction.³ It created a genre re-defining style widely appreciated as more authentic, and embodying the prevailing mood of what Rebecca West referred to at the time as the 'dreariness of the cold war'.⁴ Writing soon after the success of *The Spy* le Carré acknowledged his indebtedness to historical sources for his storytelling. For preparation, he explained, 'I began reading up the literature'. By way of example, he lists Alexander Foote's *Handbook for Spies* (1948), published accounts of the Soviet masterspy Richard Sorge, the notorious Alger Hiss and Whitaker Chambers case in America, Igor Gouzenko and the Canadian spy ring of the 1940s, *Soviet Espionage* (1955) by David Dallin, the

reporting of the various British spy cases since the war, 'and that whole frightful assembly of spy autobiography'.⁵

The following article examines the emergence of a more extensive 'public history' regarding espionage in the post-war period and considers its impact on the writing of the new-style spy novel exemplified by the stories of John le Carré. The novels began to appear during the years of intense scrutiny and debate concerning intelligence in Britain in the early 1960s, the narratives skirting around a whole slew of contemporary spy cases and official enquiries into security lapses. These blunders, in their turn, had embarrassingly followed on the heels of a decade-long series of boops which had led to penetrating questions regarding the competence of the intelligence community to guard its secrets and those of its closest allies. For many observers of the faltering British secret state, the cynicism was well founded. A spy-scandal-weary British public were left bewildered, while the *New York Times*, following the exposure of the Blake case, pondered: 'Do the Russians possess some super-natural power for espionage that Western government cannot match?'⁶

The article then probes the issue of 'insider knowledge' in the early spy stories of le Carré. As David Cornwell, the author had served in intelligence in West Germany, and some reviewers and critics had long suspected that the supposed realism in the stories had a basis in fact. In a recent article, Simon Willmetts surprisingly suggests that the 'degree of verisimilitude' in the stories represents 'the least interesting of all the realisms le Carré's work embodies and evokes'. He further contends that 'the ambiguities generated by any attempt to detect le Carré's real experience of British intelligence within his fictional worlds demonstrates that the latter is an endeavor that quickly runs aground'.⁷

The following article confronts such a viewpoint, arguing that the real-life experience of agent David Cornwell is demonstrably configured in the stories. In particular, detailed attention is given to the breakthrough novel *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*. The insider knowledge laced with the seasoning derived from the public history supplied the reading public with a concoction that seemed appropriate for the age. Perhaps ironically for an era and a series of texts infused with treachery and treason, le Carré's work provided a much-needed dose of fidelity.

Intelligence and public history in the post-war decades

'It is the essence of a Secret Service that it must be secret, and if you once begin disclosure it is perfectly obvious ... that there is no longer any Secret Service, and that you must do without it'.⁸ Speaking to the Commons in 1924, foreign secretary Austen Chamberlain voiced the classic formulation for the guiding principle of secrecy for the intelligence services. However, his ideal of silence on the matter was tested for much of the inter-war years. Leaks, revelation and scandals were fairly commonplace following the Great War. The fear of the Kaiser now dispelled, and the sting of the DORA or the Official Secrets Act perceived, mostly accurately, as being a less potent threat than during the fighting, some of SIS's wartime officers felt able to disregard their chief, Mansfield Cumming's, obsession with secrecy. Periodically, he had joked that after retiring he would publish his memoirs, a splendid volume 'quarto, bound in vellum and of 400 pages – all blank'.⁹

One instance where the authorities bore its teeth was with the writer and wartime intelligence officer Compton Mackenzie who was prosecuted for publishing sundry indiscretions in his *Greek Memories* (1932), including – perhaps harmlessly – that the Chief was known as 'C'; but far more dangerously that 'C's' wartime officers were designated as working for 'MI1-c', allowing many to be identified.¹⁰ Equally seriously, in 1927 James Alfred Ewing, the former Director of Britain's extraordinarily successful wartime codebreaking outfit Room 40, revealed details of 'the best kept secret of the war' in a public lecture in Edinburgh, much to the Admiralty's chagrin.¹¹ He was not prosecuted.¹² Nor, seemingly, despite the unfortunate experience of Compton Mackenzie, were many others deterred from indiscretions that potentially carried significant implications for security and intelligence. Perhaps inevitably, loose tongues eventually led to real and lasting damage. A case in point followed the disastrous ARCOS raid in 1927, when Prime Minister Stanley Baldwin read, and subsequently published, extracts from intercepted and decrypted Soviet telegrams to a stunned

House.¹³ Predictably, as a furious Government Code and Cypher School underlined, the Soviets changed their ciphers, leaving Britain having 'to do without'.

It took the rise of the Nazi menace to impose more discipline on talkative officials and politicians, and for the rekindling of a culture of secrecy. The previously somewhat lax Winston Churchill now embraced it, such was the value of secrets that needed protecting, particularly those that flowed out of Bletchley Park. Below him, the discretion of many of Churchill's codebreakers was unimpeachable. But after victory there was again a strong current flowing in the opposite direction. Indeed, the intelligence community in Britain experienced great difficulty in maintaining its tradition of anonymity, silence and secrecy as it came under mounting pressure from wartime secret warriors who wished to publish their experiences and successes, and from journalists intent on rooting out the hidden dimension of the Cold War. Intelligence historian Richard Aldrich has described the post-war decades for the intelligence community as 'the long retreat from absolute secrecy', a period during which the British state struggled to keep a tight lid on its secrets.¹⁴ Despite the determined efforts of 'keeping the intelligence services walled off from public view', the authorities were thwarted in preventing the circulation of some material with resultant commentary in the press.¹⁵ A later generation of historians have rather disdainfully referred to much of the spy literature that emerged during this period as the 'airport bookstall' school of intelligence historiography.¹⁶ Indeed, much of it clearly lacked a documentary base or traditional academic 'rigour'. However, such publishing was common, widespread and sometimes surprisingly well informed, and certainly should not, in blanket terms, be dismissed as lacking in substance, detail or impact. Though the Ultra Secret may have avoided detailed scrutiny for decades, Cold War espionage was a hot topic, drip fed on a seemingly never-ending diet of leaks and scandal.

Keen as they may have been to restrain domestic sources from publishing secrets, the authorities in Britain could do little to prevent great swathes of detailed information about recent espionage activity entering the public sphere in the form of official reports issued by foreign governments and authorities. The first of these followed closely on the end of the Second World War and created a sensation. Resulting from the defection in Ottawa on 5 September 1945 of Igor Gouzenko of the GRU (Soviet Military Intelligence), *The Report of the Royal Commission* published in June 1946 gave in unprecedented detail an account of the Soviet attempts to get at the West's military and atomic secrets in Canada. The report was of acute interest to the United Kingdom as it introduced the investigation that eventually led to the arrest of the British scientist Alan Nunn May in London and his conviction at the Old Bailey in May of 1946. 'Soviet Network Sensation', blared a headline, 'Atom man arrested at London lecture'.¹⁷ The findings elicited widespread commentary in newspapers, magazines and popular publications, and, according to the Canadian political historian J.L. Granatstein, its appearance heralded 'the beginning of the Cold War for public opinion'.¹⁸ The illusion that the close but cold relationship the West had maintained with the Soviets, and 'Uncle Joe' in particular, could be sustained beyond the war, was for the most part dispelled. The Gouzenko exposé left little doubt that the Soviets were waging an intelligence war, wanted the atomic bomb, and had penetrated the West's defences, particularly Britain's.

Alerted to Soviet perfidy, American counter-intelligence organisations rooted out further atom spies. Some of their investigations remained secret, unmasking the web of Soviet agents painstakingly slowly, as was the case with the *Venona* Project to decrypt intercepted wartime communications. This would eventually lead to the unmasking of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, and, eventually, the Cambridge spies, and with them another dent in the reputation of Britain's security apparatus.¹⁹ But the secret work was accompanied by public material in the form of official American reports that provided sordid details of penetration and espionage. Principal among these was *Soviet Atomic Espionage* published under the auspices of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy in 1951, a body briefed with 'defending this Nation's atomic enterprise against Soviet agents'.²⁰

Humiliatingly for its ally, the American study reported that 'further security breaches have occurred in the British program, through Dr Klaus Fuchs and through the disappearance of Dr Bruno Pontecorvo', and the relevant details and failings were gone over in detail both in the

press and by investigative authors who published books on the case with notable speed.²¹ The anti-communist hysteria whipped up in America in the 1940s and '50s ensured the continuing publication of reports into communist conspiracy and espionage by such organisations as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), which published *Exposé of Soviet Espionage* in 1960, and the House Committee on Un-American Activities which took time out of its schedule of public hearings to publish *The Shameful Years: Thirty Years of Soviet Espionage in the United States* (1951) and *Patterns of Communist Espionage* (1958), among others. Highly topical and usually containing material addressing British nationals and spy cases, the reports attracted press commentary at both national and local levels.²²

Beyond Washington, *The Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage* published in 1955 addressed in detail Soviet espionage activities in Australia.²³ The report followed the defection of senior MVD²⁴ officers Vladimir and Evdokia Petrov, and, comparable with the earlier Canadian report, outlined the Soviet methods of penetration and recruitment. In subsequent testimony, the Petrovs caused a sensation in Britain with their revelations regarding the 'missing diplomats' Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean who had suspiciously disappeared from London early in 1951. In time-honoured fashion, the authorities had attempted to keep the scandal under wraps and Prime Minister Attlee rightly anticipated 'a lot of public criticism'.²⁵ The press, in turn, beavered away to get at the truth. For them Petrov was a gift. In what was described in the British press as 'the most fantastic spy document ever compiled', Vladimir Petrov disclosed the eagerly awaited details about the mystery of Burgess and Maclean.²⁶ The account was presented as a series in the populist *People* newspaper across September–October 1955. The saga of the 'missing diplomats' was reiterated in *Empire of Fear* (1956), the Petrovs' account of their careers in Soviet intelligence and of their recent experience of defection. It underlined for all and sundry that the Soviets had not only penetrated the wartime military industrial complex, but had also reached the heart of the British establishment.

In the UK, the Petrovs's account fell on fertile ground. The disappearance of the two diplomats in May 1951, and the ensuing mystery had caught the attention of the press and its public like no other political scandal of the period. 'The two missing Britons: riddle grows', declared the headline of the *Daily Mirror*²⁷; 'Diplomats made car dash: caught St Malo boat with only minutes to spare', breathlessly reported the *Daily Mail*, again as a banner headline.²⁸ The scandal refused to dissipate: 'It is still 1951's biggest mystery', noted the *Daily Mail* reflecting back on the year.²⁹ Indeed, a decade after the pair had absconded, the *Guardian* drily commented that the Burgess and Maclean affair was 'the only British thriller to have been running longer than *The Mousetrap*'.³⁰ Endless column inches were devoted to the story and its many twists and turns.³¹ And combined with the revelations of the Petrovs, the pressure was such that the government was forced to confront the issue. On 23 September 1955, it issued the *White Paper Report Concerning the Disappearance of Two Former Foreign Office Officials*.³² And shortly thereafter, on 7 November 1955, Harold Macmillan, then Foreign Secretary, addressed Parliament on the matter, dwelling on how it came to pass that 'men could be found in Britain who could put the interests of another country before their own, and could commit the horrible crime of treachery'.³³

Inevitably, Macmillan's statement and the report failed to draw a line under the issue. Macmillan himself had noted in his speech that,

Of course, I do not intend to try to convince the House that everything that has been done by myself or my predecessors has been absolutely right and prudent in every detail. Happily, there is very little experience of this sort of thing in our country, and successive Ministers have not found it easy to strike just the right balance between saying too little and saying too much.³⁴

For the press, Macmillan was another minister who had failed to strike the right balance; even his lengthy statement remained too little, too vague. The report was pounced upon by an already irritated fourth estate and its patent inconsistencies and inadequacy created an 'uproar'.³⁵ The heady mix of class, privilege and for the times aberrant sexuality which clung around the scandal was irresistible for news editors. Reflecting on the period, intelligence

historian Anthony Glees has seen in the case of Burgess and Maclean, and the press furore which attended it, 'the making of a national obsession', and ultimately a revelation that 'horrified an innocent nation'.³⁶

The miscreant Foreign Service officials were kept at the forefront of the popular imagination through a series of publications by acquaintances and journalists, and these included Cyril Connolly's *The Missing Diplomats: The Story of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean* (1952), Geoffrey Hoare's *The Missing Macleans* (1955, wife Melinda had followed her husband into the void in 1953), Goronwy Rees' (writing anonymously) series of bitter articles in the *People* in 1955 about his former friend Guy Burgess, Tom Driberg's more friendly *Guy Burgess: A Portrait with Background* (1956), and Anthony Purdy and Douglas Sutherland's *Burgess and Maclean* (1963). The latter appeared when interest was re-ignited following the authorities' anxious issuance of a police warrant in April 1962 on the suspicion that the two men were contemplating returning to the country.³⁷ Neither the two spies nor their Soviet handlers could have anticipated the decades-long furore their defection, and the subsequent hunt for their fellow Cambridge moles, would generate in the UK. For a government desperate to dispel Britain's reputation for lax security – not least to help secure the 'great prize' of renewed atomic cooperation with the US, something that had been greatly damaged by the flood of revelations since Gouzenko – they presented a constant irritant and embarrassment.³⁸ For the press and public, they offered a fascinating and irresistible insight into how spies plied their trade, and how, seemingly, wherever one looked at the British establishment one found treachery and treason.

The government added to the stock of knowledge and further fuelled public debate on intelligence through a series of reports of enquiries it had felt obliged to issue in the wake of recent security disasters. The restricted *Romer Report* (1961) investigated the breaches of security at the Underwater Detection Establishment at Portland, the *Radcliffe Report* (1962) reviewed security procedures following the Blake disaster, the *Vassall Report* (1963) examined the case of the spy at the Admiralty, and the *Denning Report* (1963) came in the train of the Profumo scandal. *The Times* found it 'really astonishing that there should be three Official Secrets trials in 2 years, and all of them of the greatest importance'.³⁹ The long, uninterrupted sequence of Cold War spy cases and security failings stretching from the atom spies of the 1940s through to the two naval spy cases of the early 1960s shook public confidence, and unsurprisingly led to widespread accusations of incompetence of the intelligence community and failure of official security procedures. 'It was therefore natural enough', Rebecca West observed, 'that there should be a public outcry at the procession of spies which had been brought through our courts and which had not come to an end'. Despite the fact that 'the government had set up some quite imposing machinery', she pointedly added.⁴⁰ The outcry, though, was accompanied by ambiguity. Even the Foreign Secretary had felt it necessary to 'understand though not, of course, to excuse this story' by setting out the context for many who made the decision to betray, in the fight against fascism in the 1930s.⁴¹ The drumbeat of revelations suggested that loyalty was malleable, motives often base, competence frequently limited, and that the unquestionable heroism and nobility of British spies as epitomised by characters like John Buchan's Richard Hannay, was outdated.

The lengthy list of failings, revelations and shocks outlined above, amounted to a mood of disquiet which attached itself to intelligence and security in these years, and found expression in the spy novels of John le Carré. The stories traded on the surer knowledge of espionage forged through the discourse of public history, itself born of what Rebecca West described as the 'quickenning march past of spies', and which had commenced with the atom scientists who passed on one of wartime's most closely guarded secrets.⁴² In particular, the novelist was drawn to the moral corruption he saw as inevitable to espionage, and to the widespread treachery which appeared endemic in the Cold War, and which 'shook down into a kind of nightmare'. A condition had been created in which 'men betray one another by instinct and spies are drab ordinary creatures who take to betrayal as they might have taken to shoplifting'. Out of this morass, le Carré asserted, 'one visualises an anarchy of treason'.⁴³

John le Carré and the writing of espionage fiction

The Cold War world of political intrigue and betrayal was caught and reflected in a cycle of espionage stories which could be described as 'Novels of Treachery'. Literary critic Clive Bloom has seen the Cold War spy thriller as being marked by its treatment of the conditions governing traitorous behaviour. The genre type and the essentially paranoid style, he suggests, being encapsulated in Robert Harling's *The Enormous Shadow* (1955), in which a secretly communist Labour politician cultivates a Harwell scientist for defection.⁴⁴ Such novels, distinct from the previous generation of adventurous spy stories, make an appeal to the 'real' through an invocation of history. This is achieved largely through reference to real-life traitors in the stories, a device with which the author assumes a shared historical knowledge with the reader. In *The Enormous Shadow* Harling has the investigator refer to the conspiracy he is facing, and with no further need for explanation, as a 'Pontecorvo-Nunn May- Burgess-Maclean story all rolled in one'; the compounded litany of actual traitors, according to Bloom, serving as a 'talisman of realism'.⁴⁵ Other 'Novels of Treachery' include Harling's later *The Endless Colonnade* (1958), which invokes historical referents Fuchs and Nunn May, and features a psychiatrist holidaying in Italy fending off Soviet thugs who are after the secrets left in his care by a Harwell scientist; and James Barlow's *The Hour of Maximum Danger* from 1962, which invokes historical referents Fuchs, Pontecorvo, Blake and Gordon Lonsdale, and in which the Soviets erect a spy ring in London to re-capture a defected missile scientist.⁴⁶ The 'novel of treachery' closest to historical events was Nicholas Monsarrat's *Smith and Jones* (1963), a tale of two 'missing diplomats' for whom a security officer is sent out from Britain in an attempt to bring them back to the fold. Readers 'in the know' are invited to savour the parallels in character and story to the saga of Burgess and Maclean.

Le Carré's spy novels of the 1960s are sophisticated variants on the 'novel of treachery', *Call for the Dead* (1961) centring on the suspected betrayal of an official in the Foreign Office, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (1963) treating a false defector from British Intelligence, and *A Small Town in Germany* (1968) involving a man-hunt for a suspected traitor who has absconded with classified files from the British Embassy in Bonn. In the inaugural novel, in the manner typical of the cycle, le Carré makes reference to the actual traitors Donald Maclean and Klaus Fuchs, the former a senior diplomat in the Foreign Service and comparable to the suspected character in the story.

John le Carré, brought up in unconventional circumstances, from an early age underwent a sequence of formal experiences of the secret world.⁴⁷ In 1948, as a young student at the University in Bern, Switzerland, he served as a low-level courier for British Intelligence; in 1950–51, he performed his national service in the Intelligence Corps in Austria; in 1958, he joined counter-intelligence at MI5 where he also commenced writing spy fiction; and in 1960, he transferred to SIS.⁴⁸ Such specific practical experience, while clearly formative on his writing and suspected by some reviewers and journalists,⁴⁹ was unknown to the reading public until much later in the early 1980s.⁵⁰ Le Carré always remained guarded about his association with the secret world and loyal to the ideal that former operatives should remain silent.

In a succession of articles and interviews in the 1960s, le Carré suggested a relation between espionage proper, as was available in public history, and his imaginative writing, thus supporting the sense of a new realism in the fiction. The 'wearisome chore' of reading through the spy literature had in fact turned into a 'journey of discovery', in which he found 'an affinity between the writer and the spy' which took him by surprise. The novelist was 'astonished' by how much had actually been published: 'Intelligence seems to be an iceberg' he declared, 'of which 80 per cent is above the water'.⁵¹ He determined to use this goldmine to shape the atmosphere, characterisations and plot lines of his fiction. In a lively discussion on BBC television in 1966, he revealed to another writer and former secret agent Malcolm Muggeridge his grasp on recent espionage and the specific cases which he had followed closely. He reiterated his debt to the Petrov and Gouzenko affairs, both of which he declared as 'marvellously documented'; and expressed a particular fascination for recent West German spy trials, especially the morally troubling case of the double agents Felfe and Clemens,

who despite their Nazi past were happily recruited into both West German *and* Soviet Intelligence.⁵² As an exemplar of ineptitude, and an operation so crass that an author would be hard-pushed to get it accepted in fictional form, le Carré cited the Commander Crabb *débâcle* of 1956, in which SIS sent an ageing frogman kitted-out in an antiquated diving suit on an ill-fated mission to survey a Russian cruiser moored in Portsmouth Harbour on a goodwill visit.⁵³ His body was found over a year later, intelligence procedures and operations, once again, revealed as suspect, wanting and embarrassing. The influence of public history on le Carré's writing, readily acknowledged by the author, has now begun to be recognised by literary historians. For example, in a recent article, James Smith has speculated on H.J. Giske's memoir *London Calling North Pole* (1953) as providing plot material for le Carré's *The Looking Glass War* (1965), especially specific details of radio detection procedure.⁵⁴

As David Cornwell, le Carré's formative years connected him solidly with the German language and the German-speaking world, studying in Berne, taking modern languages at Oxford and specialising in German literature, serving in the military in Austria, and later in the Foreign Service in West Germany (FRG). Le Carré's four spy novels of the 1960s all have a pronounced German element, the main adversary being the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in three stories, and three with settings in one or other of the Germanies. Familiarity with the German scene was clearly helpful to the budding writer, and the divided Germany offered an unrivalled setting for topical stories of espionage. A report issued by the Federal Ministry of the Interior in the mid-1960s confirmed West Germany as 'the chief hunting ground of the Communist espionage agencies', with activity from East Germany, the Soviets, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Yugoslavia and Rumania recently 'intensifying', and as many as 1014 attempts at recruitment ran to ground in 1964.⁵⁵ Other espionage efforts by the East, of course, were successful, and it is estimated that the Stasi managed an informal and formal network comprising thousands of operatives in the Federal Republic, a fact of which le Carré would have been more than aware.⁵⁶ The Germanies were a hub for gritty Cold War espionage in fact, and a tableau upon which to explore developments at home. He explained at the time how the setting could serve important social and political ambitions in his writing.

An Englishman in Germany at the moment may not be very clever about Germany, but experiencing the German scene he can become a great deal more clever about his own country and this is what draws me constantly to describe Englishmen in a German context . . . the English scene illustrated in the German context.⁵⁷

It is also without question that his awareness of the German scene gained as a serving intelligence officer in Bonn and Hamburg would have provided le Carré with an insider's knowledge of the unstable and complex political realities of the divided Germany. An insight which can be productively speculated upon from the imaginative evidence of espionage presented in the stories, and this placed alongside what can be gleaned from historical sources detailing Western operations against the GDR.

The new realism and espionage fact and fiction

As the critic Tony Barley has observed, 'Le Carré himself acknowledges that to an extent, both his material and his audience were ready-made'. Speaking in 1968, the novelist stated his view that, 'the romanticized vision of the spy which was presented by [Ian] Fleming created a kind of hunger for something more realistic'. 'We'd had the public picture already of the seedy army of spies', he continued:

We knew about Hiss and Colonel Abel, and the English in particular - we knew them better than we knew our own writers. We could count them off like our best athletes - Burgess and Maclean, Vassall, Blake and the rest - so that the rather treacly handling of the espionage problem created a counter-market which I was fortunately able to feed.⁵⁸

In addition to the obvious contrast with the fantasy of James Bond, a 'reality effect' could be achieved in the hands of le Carré through diligent research and the subtle application of insider

knowledge.⁵⁹ The inaugural *Call for the Dead* was written while le Carré was serving in MI5 and the plot, concerned with counter-intelligence, conforms to the type of work with which the author was familiar.⁶⁰ In the novel le Carré introduced his main series character George Smiley, into whom the author poured his own interests and experiences of Oxford, Germany, Switzerland, and a passion for seventeenth century German literature. In an almost throw-away passage, le Carré explains Smiley's return to intelligence after having been let go at the end of the war. His recall was the result of 'the revelations of a young Russian cypher-clerk in Ottawa'; a revealing moment of complicity between author and reader. The reference, of course, is to an initiating event of the Cold War, Igor Gouzenko and the Canadian spy ring of the mid-1940s, and demonstrates from the outset the place of public history in the literature of John le Carré, and an expectation from the author of an equivalence of knowledge from the reader.⁶¹

But what of the deployment of insider knowledge by le Carré in his spy stories? On this sensitive point, the author has been non-committal, preferring to suggest that his fiction was only offered as 'credible', and recoiled from any suggestion that it was 'authentic'.⁶² There can be little doubt, though, that his experience in the office bled through into the pages of his fiction. MI5's Millicent Bagot, recruited in 1931 and destined to become 'the Service's leading expert in Soviet Communism', is widely believed to have served as the inspiration for le Carré's Connie Sachs, George Smiley's encyclopaedic-minded Karla watcher and who first appears in *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* (1974).⁶³ MI5's Alex Kellar, adopted into the service from Security and Intelligence Middle East, was suspected by fellow officers of being the inspiration 'for the man in cream cuffs' in *Call for the Dead*. Christopher Andrew notes that Cornwell 'would have known Kellar during his career in the Security Service'.⁶⁴ Even more suggestive was the placing of John Bingham in the novels. Bingham was a serving officer with MI5 and something of a mentor figure for David Cornwell when he worked there in the late 1950s. Bingham, an established writer of crime fiction, encouraged Cornwell to emulate him, helped get the younger man taken on at his publishers Gollancz, served as one of the principal models for le Carré's spymaster George Smiley, and possibly provided the pen name under which Cornwell would publish, the young author adopting his first name and adding le Carré (Square), this being the nickname he ascribed to the older man.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, scholars and critics have largely shied away from investigating in any detail the actual traces of professional experience of intelligence and security in the stories. Intelligence historian Anthony Glees is a rarity in trying to tease out the substance of any proximity of fact with fiction. He confirms the actuality of 'a dangerous covert war being waged by the East German secret service against targets in the United Kingdom to help perpetuate its rule in East Germany and the rule of Communism more generally'. Precisely the situation depicted in le Carré's *Call for the Dead* in which East German operatives under trade cover are targeting a Foreign Office official.⁶⁶ Glees finds it ironic that it was an author of spy fiction 'who provided the most accurate picture of the awful reality of East German spying'. 'Le Carré seems to have known such a great deal about the Stasi in the early 1960s', he continues, 'whereas most other people (in the West), even where they were professionally interested in East Germany, appear ignorant'. Glees points to material in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* as suspiciously revealing of insider knowledge. For example, le Carré sets out 'a number of central motifs' typical to the spying of the East Germans, including the use of other eastern Bloc embassies as spy bases and their exploitation of British Communist Party members. In Fiedler's expression of the desire for an East German embassy in London, as a secret service need for an intelligence base of its own, Glees sees as an actual reflection of the evidence in the Stasi files, a surprising appreciation from le Carré when 'there seems to have been almost no awareness of this in the West and few, if any, worries about this aspect of recognition either in the UK or in West Germany'.⁶⁷

Secret Intelligence Service files, of course, remain inaccessible, and it is not possible to reconstruct operations into East Germany, of the kind depicted in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, from British archives in any great detail. Keith Jeffery's history of the Secret Intelligence Service draws a line at 1949, years before le Carré joined the Service. But it offers a glimpse of the scale and significance of

operations against the GDR; for example, quoting Bruce Lockhart, who in 1948 undertook responsibility for all 'agent-running networks' in Germany, stating that Germany was 'the nursery of SIS' and the place where, more than anywhere else, the Service first began to learn how to adjust to the transition from war through occupation to an uneasy peace and then to the Cold War'.⁶⁸

Closer to the time of the novels, some insight can be gained from various contemporary publications issued by West German organisations active in the propaganda war between East and West, which sought to expose the threat posed by the Ministry of State Security of the GDR and its spying on the West. Some of the material was issued in English translation, such as the twin-themed *East Berlin: Propaganda and Subversion Center (for the Attack against the Existence and the Constitutional Order of the Federal Republic of Germany)* and *Base of Operations of the East Block Intelligence Services*, issued in West Berlin (1959), published by the State Office for the Protection of the Constitution,⁶⁹ and *East Berlin: Main Centre of Agitation and Sedition (for the Attack on the Stability and Constitutional System of the Federal Republic of Germany)* and *Base Operations of the Eastern Intelligence Service* issued around 1962. These provided some details on Eastern intelligence services and their recruitment of agents, and such illegal practices as forgery, burglary, forcible abductions and planned murders. In 1960, *Berlin-Lichtenberg, Normannenstrasse 22 (Agentenzentrale SSD)* by Peter Herz was published by the Investigations Committee of Free Jurists.⁷⁰ An edition was issued annually for a number of years. It is apparent that such publications were acquired by western intelligence services from the fact that the latter was circulated among departments of the American Central Intelligence Agency in an English translation as *Organization and Operations of the East German State Security Service*.⁷¹ It is possible that such material was required reading for intelligence officers newly arrived in West Germany, as could have been the case with David Cornwell in 1960.

The absolute restriction on SIS documents has led historians to search more creatively for material on western intelligence operations into East Germany. The diligent researches of Paul Maddrell into the counter-espionage records of the Stasi has allowed a partial reconstruction of some operations. As he explains, 'Since the Stasi had a large and active counter-intelligence service, its records could shed striking new light on the operations of other secret services as well, Britain's Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) among them'.⁷² In the 1950s, the SIS outstation in West Berlin with around 100 staff was its largest, indicative of the city as the espionage front line of the Cold War. Maddrell discovers from the Stasi records that SIS devoted much of its effort to collecting high-grade economic intelligence, and that in this pursuit the service was very selective, aiming 'to recruit high-quality agents who could provide information over the long term'.⁷³ Accordingly, 'SIS tried to recruit spies in the GDR's central institutions of economic trade, particularly its foreign trade and planning agencies, to provide information on exports, imports, dependence on raw materials and economic plans'. In this aim, Maddrell confirms, 'SIS did successfully recruit spies in these institutions', and by the end of the 1950s, 'SIS had several spies reporting on the GDR's economy. They provided economic plans and production analyses (both original documents and photocopies)'.⁷⁴

It is fair to assume that SIS officer David Cornwell, stationed in Bonn and later Hamburg, and whose professional duties took him to West Berlin, would have been aware of SIS operational policy in the region. The evidence of key plot points and characterisations in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* certainly support such an assumption. In fact, the similarity between espionage fact as unearthed by Maddrell and narrative fiction as it is expressed in *The Spy* supports the suspicion that Le Carré deployed insider knowledge in his stories. In his review of *The Spy*, Francis Iles revealingly describes it as a 'spy story documentary', complaining even that in parts it was 'almost too documentary'.⁷⁵ Such a judgement, of course, senses, or is even convinced, by an authenticity to the story; one that is confirmed by a close examination of the narrative. In the novel, the defecting agent Leamas, as part of his debriefing by the communists, goes over his career as a British intelligence officer operating against the GDR which had commenced early in 1951. The detail is surprising and outstrips that required for a conventional spy thriller. Promoted to 'Deputy-Controller of Area', Leamas oversaw all networks operating in East Germany. 'It had taken a long time to build a decent East Zone network from Berlin', Leamas explains.⁷⁶ Le Carré, in signature fashion, then takes

the opportunity to paint a convincingly drab and depressing picture of the environment, the kind of image and texture consistent with the propaganda reports of the time:

In the early days the city had been thronging with second-rate agents: intelligence was discredited and so much part of the daily life of Berlin that you could recruit a man at a cocktail party, brief him over dinner and he would be blown by breakfast. For a professional it was a nightmare: dozens of agencies, half of them penetrated by the opposition, thousands of loose ends; too many leads, too few sources, too little space to operate.⁷⁷

The first big success for the Leamas network came in 1954 with the recruitment of Fritz Feger, a high official in the Defence Ministry, who lasted for nearly 2 years before he was tumbled. It was not until 1959 that an equivalently placed agent was secured, Karl Riemeck who served as Secretary to the Praesidium of the East German Communist Party and referred to as 'third man in the Ministry of the Interior'.⁷⁸ Riemeck was an unexpected 'walk-in', offering up his services to British Intelligence and accepting payment. He immediately provided valuable 'internal political and economic reporting', such as a 'draft revision of the East Germans' relationship to COMECON',⁷⁹ and more unexpectedly, detailed material from the files of the GDR's intelligence service.⁸⁰

The predominantly high-grade political and economic intelligence served up by Riemeck was precisely the kind of material prioritised by British Intelligence at the time. Original documents, translated by Paul Maddrell, have the Stasi reporting on western secret services 'concentrating on finding out about the economic potential of the GDR', revealing that 'the main focus of the economic spying is inquiring into the key economic sectors of the GDR', and giving the example of an agent of the English secret service who, in a manner seemingly identical to the fictional Riemeck, 'had the task of handing over or photocopying all the research papers on economically significant projects'.⁸¹ No wonder Leamas acknowledges Riemeck as 'the best agent I ever knew'.⁸² Le Carré further emphasises the pre-eminence of economic intelligence as the target for British Intelligence in a brief reference to 'Satellites Four', headed by Peter Guillam, a prominent character in the author's *oeuvre*, and a unit tasked with sourcing 'Economic stuff' from 'The Zone. East Germany'.⁸³

In other ways, too, le Carré's *The Spy* integrated elements from recent espionage history, notably in terms of characterisation, some plot lines and other bits of business (le Carré is authentic in showing a British preference for safe houses for agent meets, for example). As an Intelligence professional stationed in West Germany, le Carré would have been well-aware of the recent treachery of George Blake, the SIS officer stationed in Berlin who had served the Soviets for some years. The extraordinary case must have been *the* subject of office talk. The British authorities, as was their manner, had sought to minimise the scandal through keeping all but the outline details secret until the line simply could not hold. As material appeared in the American and West German press, Fleet Street no longer felt bound to silence and reports seeped into British newspapers and thus into public history.⁸⁴ Over the years, a succession of ministers were forced to deal with a succession of Blake-related scandals at the dispatch box of the House of Commons.⁸⁵ Shortly after the publication of *The Spy*, le Carré mused on the nature of treachery. 'Does a spy', he pondered, 'who knows that other men have their own price, secretly calculate his own?'. 'Does that account for the thread of treachery which has run through the intelligence services?' he wondered. 'Does his technique become an end in itself?'. 'Like a footballer, perhaps, he's not concerned any more with which team he plays for'.⁸⁶

Around the time of *The Spy*, in making reference to 'some recent double-agent cases in Germany and Britain', le Carré confirmed the influence of this aspect of espionage and its public history on his story.⁸⁷ It was not Blake, though, who seemed to occupy the writer's thoughts; rather, as we have seen, it was the West German double-agent Heinz Felfe who caught his fascination. He had served in the SS Foreign Intelligence branch, the SD (Sicherheitsdienst) during the war, and Felfe was clearly the inspiration for Hans-Dieter Mundt in *The Spy*, also a former Nazi and now double-agent, but crucially London's man in East German intelligence and therefore to be protected at all costs. Felfe had worked for British Intelligence between 1947 and 1950, reporting on Communist Party activities in the Cologne area, but was dropped on the well-founded suspicion that he was also working for the Soviets.⁸⁸ This was an additional layer of

delicious irony which greatly appealed to le Carré as he reflected on 'what makes a man go over to the other side'.⁸⁹ Felfe had risen by 1955 to taking charge of counter-intelligence against the Soviets. Thus, the head of the West German office charged with countering Soviet espionage in the FRG was himself a Soviet agent, a position comparable with that of Kim Philby in SIS before suspicions forced his move out of the service. Felfe, along with associates Hans Clemens and Erwin Tiebel, like Blake, came to trial in 1961 and expressly informed the narrative and style of le Carré's first masterpiece.

The Spy drew most overtly on the recent history of containment in the Cold War, the erection of the Berlin Wall, which had securely divided the city in 1961 and served as 'the supreme setting for the East–West conflict'.⁹⁰ The novel commences and finishes at the Wall, and the ugly abomination of concrete and barbed wire becomes the final resting place for the disillusioned agent Leamas. Paul Maddrell has shown how the appearance of the secure sectoral boundary menaced western operations into the GDR. As an East German document put it at the time:

The protection measures taken by the government of the GDR on 13.8.1961 on the state border with West Berlin gave rise to a considerable obstruction to the subversive work of the secret services, particularly owing to the substantial elimination of West Berlin as a base for spying on the German Democratic Republic.⁹¹

In *The Spy*, le Carré refers to the elimination of the agents Paul, Viereck, Ländser, Salomon and others unnamed, and the consequent rolling up of Leamas' networks in East Germany. The, admittedly imprecise, chronology of the story places such activity in the first part of 1961, in the period of tension leading up to the erection of the Wall.⁹² The detail is consistent with counter-espionage activity by the GDR and its operation *Frühling*, which had targeted agents of SIS and eliminated a reputed five networks in 1955. The wider *Blitz* operation was reputed to have netted 105 agents of the 'British secret service'.⁹³ Even closer to the chronology of *The Spy*, the recent treachery of George Blake had devastated SIS operations in East Germany. As Maddrell cites from GDR sources, 'information provided by Blake enabled the Stasi to identify approximately 100 spies in the GDR in the years 1958–61'.⁹⁴ Furthermore, 'the five spies who supplied high-grade political and economic information were probably betrayed by Blake'.⁹⁵ Le Carré would have been familiar with such details, and they were realistically incorporated into his novel, both in the character of the agent Riembeck serving up to the British political and economic intelligence, and as the catalyst for Control's operation against the East German security service.

The construction of the Berlin Wall, as planned, proved an effective security measure against western espionage, and as Maddrell has acknowledged, 'Spying and subversion against the GDR would have to be carried out under harsher conditions', and that 'The secret services' entire work was menaced' by the closing of the border.⁹⁶ Owing to the treachery of George Blake, 'SIS seems to have been eliminated from espionage in the GDR'.⁹⁷ Le Carré incorporates this scenario in the rolling-up of the Leamas networks, an accurate rendition of the situation facing the British secret service in the Eastern Zone. To this stark reality, the author then brings an element of wishful thinking, a generic requirement perhaps for a commercial novel, or a salve to sunken morale in a service humiliated brought to its knees by internal treachery. The destruction of Riembeck and the network is ultimately revealed as part of Control's devious and highly morally questionable operation to protect its most secret agent Mundt. British Intelligence is not finished in the GDR after all it seems, but in gaining the world, le Carré asks, has it lost its soul?

Conclusion

In the two decades which followed the Second World War general awareness of espionage improved significantly from a fairly low base. Interest was fed by the release of official reports of spy cases, and subsequent press reporting and popular accounts which placed in the public sphere unprecedented details of clandestine activity and treachery. With a few notable exceptions, historians have seldom appreciated the widespread understanding, knowledge and interest created by the public history of espionage in the period.⁹⁸

There has also been a lack of appreciation of the role of public history in the shaping of spy fiction. As shown, the 'Novel of Treachery' was firmly embedded in the temper of its time, and the style in the hands of John le Carré could advance spy fiction to new levels of historical plausibility. Readers and critics became more firmly aware of the authentic-seeming qualities of le Carré's stories with the best-selling *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, and reviewers insisted on a level of reality for the tale – after all, they also knew their espionage history.⁹⁹ Despite persistent denials of authenticity for the story, the author could not help himself, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the novel, of playing the game of inscribing the fiction back into the known history. 'Few secret operations into East Germany could take place without the connivance of the BND' le Carré observed. Leamas, who ran a network of agents in the GDR, therefore must have been a regular visitor to Pullach, the headquarters of the BND in Bavaria, where surely he ran into the 'valued chief of counter-intelligence, Heinz Felfe, formerly of the SS and Sicherheitdienst?' Similarly, le Carré speculated, Leamas must have enjoyed access to the ultra-secret 'special material' obtained by Operation GOLD, the secret tunnel that ran west to east under Berlin and tapped into Soviet telecommunications cables.¹⁰⁰

There has been a sprinkling of attempts to consider espionage fiction in the light of espionage fact. Much of the work has revealed a broad outline of correspondence between historical espionage and its mythology.¹⁰¹ More recent authors have offered deeper insights. For instance, James Smith has considered le Carré's *The Looking Glass War* in terms of 'coded and long-running debates from within the British intelligence community'.¹⁰² These academic voices have been complemented by former intelligence officers who have attempted an 'operational critique' of spy fiction, John le Carré being a particular target, as in the case of Tod Hoffman and his *Le Carré's Landscape* (2001). Former CIA operations officer Barry Royden admitted to enjoying le Carré in the 1960s, and when looking back on the novels found them to be 'good reading as well as reasonably accurate renditions of the intelligence operational world', concluding that 'le Carré still presents our world more accurately than most'.¹⁰³ Allen Dulles, former Director of CIA, felt that *The Looking Glass War* was le Carré's best book, maintaining that,

[t]o anyone who has ever been associated with an intelligence service, its jumble of unusual personalities, their speech and behavior, their daily business, and even the awful scheme which carries them in their enthusiasm far from reality - all ring true. It is perhaps for this very reason that the nonprofessional reader may miss much that is outstanding in the book.¹⁰⁴

For le Carré, the fiction was 'credible' but not 'authentic'. While accepting that he had been 'immersed in the German scene', he claimed no professional interest in East Germany and certainly 'no insider's knowledge'.¹⁰⁵ 'The proof that the novel was *not* authentic – how many times did I have to repeat this? – had been delivered by the fact that it was published', he declared.¹⁰⁶ Le Carré has always been consistent in this stance, so much so that one is tempted to declare, 'Thou doth protest too much!'.¹⁰⁷

On the matter of the deployment of insider-knowledge in the novels, the article has argued the strong possibility, despite the author's denials. There is an irrefutable correspondence between fact and fiction in *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, a measure of detail that cannot reasonably be explained by coincidence, and the use of material that would only have been available to a professional intelligence officer. In view of the placement of authentic intelligence material in stories, literary critics have begun to explore the possibility of spy fiction leaking classified material.¹⁰⁸ The example of John le Carré and *The Spy*, as unravelled here, is a prominent case in point. Certain features of official policy and recent operational experience, the targeting of economic intelligence, the elimination of networks, are all exposed in the story. Historical details which remain closely guarded secrets in the SIS files, and which only came to light 50 years after the event due to intrepid researches in the former enemy's archive, were, in fact, made available to the public near the time of the original events. Surprisingly so in a popular spy story, which many soon suspected was closer to the truth than either the authorities or the author would admit.

Contrary to what some have argued, there was an emerging sense that le Carré's writing bore strong resemblance to contemporary espionage, its concerns and practices.¹⁰⁹ Historical enquiry, as demonstrated here, confirms such a suspicion. Authenticity is, therefore, part of the hierarchy of realism in the novels, and not one to be casually dismissed. Indeed, we would argue that verisimilitude is a fundamental element to the stories and the experience of reading them. It was recognised by the most astute reviewers, some intelligence officials who were prepared to share their thoughts, and no doubt was and remains a significant part of the joy of reading the novels.

Notes

1. de Gramont, *The Secret War*, 279.
2. One commentary at the time explained the unusual decision to allow public access to the trial in terms of a considered response to the USSR's indignant posturing to the West's spying in the recent U2 incident. Bulloch and Miller, *Spy Ring*, 10. For a more recent account, see Barnes: *Dead Doubles*. For an assessment of *Ring of Spies* see Burton, *Looking-Glass Wars*, 267–70.
3. le Carré's second novel *A Murder of Quality* (1962), although it featured his spymaster character George Smiley, is a classic detective story with no espionage dimension.
4. West, *The New Meaning*, 192.
5. le Carré, 'The Writer,'.
6. King, 'Blake'.
7. Willmetts, 'The many realisms', 1, 2.
8. Quoted in Andrew, *Secret Service*, 500.
9. This is repeated by Judd, 'Two wars and three C's'. The scope and scale of the diaries is discussed briefly in Jeffery, *MI6*, 23. An example of Secret Service memoirs which followed in the wake of the conflict, and frowned upon in some quarters, was Nicholas Everitt's *British Secret Service During the Great War* (1920).
10. Jeffery, *MI6*, 239–240; Kaufman, 'Spyography'.
11. The speech is available in ADM 1/23899. Details of the lecture and its revelations were reported in *The Scotsman*, December 14, 1927.
12. Hugh Clelland Hoy faced some hindrance when he came to publish an account of the wartime work of Room 40. The former private secretary to the director of naval intelligence saw his *40, OB, or How the War was Won* (1932) withdrawn at the request of the authorities and only allowed to publication following some ellisions. See *Daily Mirror*, May 12, 1932.
13. The statement itself is available in Hansard: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/1927-05-24/debates/8d68f654-d5e8-4c1b-8099-35c3dfd7000e/PrimeMinisterSStatement> (Circa Column 1848), This episode is also widely discussed, including Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 2017: 55–58.
14. Aldrich 'Policing the Past', 923. See also, Moran, *Classified*.
15. Moran, 'The Pursuit of Intelligence History', 35.
16. *Ibid.*, 36. For a further discussion of the possible merits of the 'airport bookstall' genre see Gaspard, 'The Hidden Origins'.
17. *Daily Mail*, March 5, 1946.
18. Quoted in the *Toledo Blade*, December 25, 1984. Accounts of the Canadian case which re-presented material from the official report for popular audiences were Bernard Newman's *The Red Spider Web* (1947), Richard Hirsch's *The Soviet Spies* (1947), and John Baker White's *The Soviet Spy System* (1948). For a topical magazine article see Touche, 'The Soviet Espionage in Canada'. Two right-wing pamphlets detailing and discussing the case were HW Henderson's *Communist Spies in Canada* (UK, 1946) and Eric Butler's *The Real Communist Menace* (Australia, 1946). In 1948, Igor Gouzenko published his own account as *This Was My Choice*, and this was the source for the Hollywood film *The Iron Curtain* (1948) which dramatised the Gouzenko case.
19. For more on Venona see the National Security Agency, in particular <https://www.nsa.gov/Helpful-Links/NSA-FOIA/Declassification-Transparency-Initiatives/Historical-Releases/Venona/>
20. Report of the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy, 'Soviet Atomic Espionage' (Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1951), accessible at <https://li.proquest.com/elhpdf/histcontext/CMP-1951-AEJ-0003.pdf>
21. *Soviet Atomic Espionage*, iii. Popular accounts which drew on the official report and the trials of Nunn May and Fuchs included Bernard Newman's *Soviet Atomic Spies* (1952), Alan Moorhead's *The Traitors: The Double Life of Fuchs, Pontecorvo and Nunn May* (1952), serialised in the *Sunday Times*, and Oliver Pilat's *The Atom Spies* (1954).
22. See *The Times*, April 9, 1951; *Daily Telegraph*, September 28, 1960; *Belfast News-Letter* April 9, 1951; *Yorkshire Observer* December 31, 1951. For broad popular accounts of Soviet espionage, see Justin Athol, *How Stalin Knows. The Inside Story of the Soviets Spy Ring* (1951), Francis Noel – Baker, *The Spy Web* (1954), and E.H. Cookridge, *The Soviet Spy Net* (1955, digested in *U.S. News and World Report*, August 19, 1955).
23. The report is available at <https://catalogue.nla.gov.au/Record/709471>

24. Ministry of Internal Affairs, the forerunner of the KGB.
25. Attlee quoted in Aldrich and Cormac, *The Black Door*, 146.
26. *The People*, September 18, 1955.
27. *Daily Mirror*, June 8, 1951.
28. *Daily Mail*, June 9, 1951.
29. *Daily Mail*, December 17, 1951.
30. *Guardian*, 21 April, 1962. Agatha Christie's *The Mousetrap* opened in London's West End in 1952.
31. A search for 'Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean' on the *Gale Primary Sources* database yields 193 results between 1950 and 1960.
32. This is available at <https://archive.org/details/B-001-014-090>
33. See House of Commons Hansard, HC Deb 07 November 1955 vol 545 cc1483-611, 'Former Foreign Office Officials (Disappearance)' available at <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1955/nov/07/former-foreign-office-officials-1>
34. *Ibid.*
35. The popular newspaper the *Daily Express* offered on two separate occasions a reward of £1000 for information which would clear up the mystery, and the story of the efforts of the press more generally was compiled in Seaman and Mather, *The Great Spy Scandal*.
36. Glee, *The Secrets of the Service*, 1,7.
37. See FCO 158/18, 'Preparation of possible legal case against Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean'.
38. On the 'great prize' and the strategic, diplomatic, and intelligence dimensions of the pursuit for nuclear cooperation see Goodman, 'With a Little Help from My Friends', 155-183, and Baylis, 'Exchanging nuclear secrets', 33-61.
39. 'Ministers' Responsibility in Secrets Cases,' *The Times*, October 31, 1962. The extent of newspaper interest in the recent spy scandals is indicated in the *Report of the Tribunal appointed to Inquire into the Vassall Case and Related Matters* (1963), which commented on the 'large volume of published material appearing in our national Press' and reported that the inquiry had consulted 250 separate articles (London: HMSO, 4). As well as the books cited above, and especially Rebecca West's acclaimed and influential *The New Meaning of Treason*, these years also saw such popular publications on espionage as Peter Deriabin's *The Secret World* (1960), Edward Carran's *The Soviet Spy Web* (1961), J. Bernard Hutton's *Danger from Moscow* (1960) and *School for Spies. The ABC of How Russia's Secret Service Operates* (1961), Bernard Newman's *The World of Espionage* (1962), Col. Vernon Hinchley's *Spy Mysteries Unveiled* (1963), Rebecca West's *The Vassall Affair* (1963), John Bulloch's *M15: The Origin and History of British Counter-Espionage* (1963) and Ralph de Toledano's *The Greatest Plot in History* (1963, about the atom spies).
40. West, *The New Meaning*, 323.
41. 'Former Foreign Office Officials (Disappearance)', op.cit.
42. West, *The New Meaning*, 294.
43. Le Carré, 'The Writer,'.
44. Like other leading British writers of spy fiction, Harling, a friend and wartime associate of Ian Fleming in Naval Intelligence, had some espionage experience.
45. Bloom, 'Introduction', 9.
46. The Russian scientist was likely based on the Soviet aeronautical expert G.A. Tokaev who defected to the British from East Germany in 1948 and published his story as *Comrade X* (1956). Barlow claims to have spent months studying 'known Communist techniques of infiltration and espionage' in preparing his story. Details from book jacket (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1962).
47. Le Carré's upbringing and entry into the world of intelligence is presented in fictional form in his novel *A Perfect Spy* (1986).
48. Sisman, *John le Carré*, 71-79, 90-115, 184-258. For a more sceptical view on le Carré's supposed intelligence experience, see West, 'Birds of a Feather'.
49. See, for example, 'New Fiction', *The Times*, September 12, 1963, and the review of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, *The New York Times*, January 10, 1964.
50. While there was suspicion that le Carré had some acquaintance with the secret world, he firmly maintained that he had merely been an official of the Foreign Office. It has commonly been suggested that the author's connection with both the Security and Secret Intelligence Services was divulged in 1983, in an article in *Newsweek* and from le Carré's own lips on *The South Bank Show*. See Lewis, *John le Carré*, 7.
51. Le Carré, 'The Writer,'.
52. For a contemporary account of the Felfe and Clemens case see Hagen, *The Secret War for Europe*, 49-66.
53. For the actual operation, see Goodman, 'Covering up Spying in the "Buster" Crabb Affair'.
54. Smith, 'John le Carré's The Looking Glass War', 6.
55. *Guardian*, July 31, 1965.
56. Pidd, 'The researcher', *Guardian*, November 23, 2011.
57. Quoted in Barley, *Taking Sides*, 80.
58. *Ibid.*, 30-31.

59. In briefly considering the year 1963, a number of events linking spy fiction and the public history of espionage are illuminating. In April, Ian Fleming published the 10th James Bond adventure *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*; in June, the Minister of War resigned and the Profumo Affair, lingering in the background for some period, was out in the open; in September, John le Carré published *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*; and in October, the film of Fleming's *From Russia with Love* began to break box-office records. In a more extreme form than ever before, an espionage scandal elicited the contrasting responses of more fantasy on the one hand, and greater realism on the other.
60. For a brief vignette of his work, see Ash, 'The Real Le Carré'. For a detailed overview of the Security Service's work at this point in time, see 'Section D' of Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*.
61. le Carré, *Call for the Dead*, 13.
62. le Carré, 'The Writer,'.
63. See Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, 205–206. See also, Michael Evans, 'Le Carré's "Connie" dies aged 99', *The Times*, June 3, 2006.
64. Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm*, 494, 1264.
65. Sisman, *John le Carré*, 200–213; Jago, *The Man Who Was George Smiley*, 186.
66. In the late 1950s East Germany was attempting to establish trade missions in Britain similar to the kind le Carré fictionalises. See Glees, *The Stasi Files*, 70–77.
67. Glees, *The Stasi Files*, 106–107.
68. Jeffery, *MI6*, 668.
69. Originally published as *Östliche Untergrundarbeit gegen Westberlin* (1959).
70. Normannenstrasse 22 was the address in East Berlin of the main HQ of the State Security Service.
71. A copy is available at: https://www.archives.gov/files/research/foreign-policy/cold-war/berlin-wall-1962-1987/dvd/pdfs/prologue_5/1959-04-28a.pdf. Intriguingly, the document lists individuals with the names Mundt and Fiedler, the surnames of the two main German characters in le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*.
72. Maddrell, 'British Intelligence through the Eyes of the Stasi', 48.
73. *Ibid.*, 53. For a contemporary assessment of economic intelligence see 'Articles on Economic Intelligence', a themed issue of *Studies in Intelligence*, May 1956 (a classified CIA publication). A copy is available at <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP78T03194A000100010001-2.pdf>
74. *Ibid.*, 54, 55.
75. *Guardian*, October 11, 1963.
76. le Carré, *The Spy*, 88.
77. *Ibid.*, 88–89.
78. *Ibid.*, 94.
79. The Council for Economic Assistance was formed in 1949 to facilitate and coordinate the economic development of the countries of the eastern bloc.
80. le Carré, *The Spy*, 92. The relevance of the intelligence material only becomes apparent once security chief Mundt is identified as a British agent, and that it is he who is manipulating Riemack.
81. Maddrell, *Exploiting and Securing*, 32. See also, Maddrell, 'The Economic Dimension of Cold War Intelligence-Gathering', 101–2.
82. le Carré, *The Spy*, 85.
83. *Ibid.*, 140.
84. Cookridge, *Traitor Betrayed*, 148–50.
85. Blake features 36 times in the House of Commons Hansard in the 1960s, see <https://hansard.parliament.uk/>
86. le Carré, 'The Writer,'.
87. *Ibid.*
88. Goda, Norman J. W. 'CIA Files Relating to Heinz Felfe, SS officer and KGB Spy', document available at <https://sgp.fas.org/eprint/goda.pdf>
89. le Carré, 'The Writer,'.
90. Mews, 'The Spies Are Coming in from the Cold War', 51. Writing in the same collection, Jürgen Kamm argues that the appearance of the Berlin Wall provided the *coup de grâce* to the romantic spy fiction of Ian Fleming and 'gave rise to the "new realism" in secret agent fiction' of the kind pioneered by John le Carré, 'The Berlin Wall and Cold War Espionage', 63.
91. 'Assessment by Main Department IX of the Espionage of the Main Western Secret Services in the GDR, based on its Investigation of Cases of Spying in 1961', in Maddrell, *Exploiting and Securing*, 33.
92. A workable chronology for the story is suggested in Monaghan, *Smiley's Circus*, 30–32.
93. Maddrell, 'British Intelligence through the Eyes of the Stasi', 67.
94. *Ibid.*
95. *Ibid.*, 69.
96. Maddrell, *Exploiting and Securing*, 4.

97. Ibid., 70. The Stasi was also guided in the *Frühling* operation by information from Kim Philby, although it would be some years before the figure of Philby would loom large over the espionage fiction of le Carré, especially the novel *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* of 1974.
98. These exceptions include Moran and Gaspard.
99. For a discussion of 'realism' in spy fiction, see Willmetts, 'Reconceiving Realism', For 'realism' in le Carré, see Willmetts, 'The many realisms'.
100. le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, 235. Even before the tunnel's completion, it had been blown to the Soviets by George Blake.
101. See Stafford, *The Silent Game*, Hitz, *The Great Game*, Wiant, 'Spy Fiction, Spy Reality', and Winks and Eifrig, 'Spy Fiction-Spy Reality'.
102. Smith, 'John le Carré's The Looking Glass War', 3.
103. Royden, 'The Spy', 11.
104. Dulles, *Great Spy Stories*, 347.
105. In reply to questions posed by Anthony Glees, *The Stasi Files*, 107.
106. le Carré, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold: Fiftieth Anniversary Edition*, 233.
107. Some have offered a theory that SIS in fact encouraged the novel's publication, Newman, *The World of Espionage*, 22–23, and West, *The New Meaning*, 305.
108. Jago Morrison and Alan Burton, 'Secrets, Leaks and the Novel: Writers, British Intelligence and the Public Sphere after World War Two', *Arbeiten aus Anglistik und Amerikanistik* forthcoming 2023.
109. See Willmetts, 'The many realisms', 8.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

Research for this article was supported by the Arts & Humanities Research Council (Grant AH/V001000/1)

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