

State Of the Nations Of Spies and Spying

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London The exchange of Greville Wynne for Gordon Lonsdale in Berlin has one interesting feature in common with the other most celebrated recent case of the same kind — the exchange of Francis Gary Powers for Rudolf Abel.

In each case the West gave up an important Soviet spy for a person who in such terms is extremely unimportant.

I do not mean to belittle Mr. Powers as a pilot by calling him unimportant. I am sure he is one of the best. But by the standards of measurement used in the spy business, Mr. Powers was just another technician



Caught Any
Cloak-and-Dagger Men Lately?

who knew how to drive fast, high-flying airplanes. He would never give a James Bond any competition.

The same goes for Greville Wynne. By Soviet standards he was a spy but he apparently was an amateur — not a true pro. The best information available about him is that he was a salesman who perhaps enjoyed the thrill of doing some spying on the side. It probably gave him a sense of importance.

The public record does not, of course, show whether Mr. Wynne ever brought or sent home any useful secret information. He may have picked up a minor tidbit here or there. But he almost certainly was not in the big-time branch of the business.

Messrs. Lonsdale and Abel were in the big time. They were professionals who had been through all the highest postgraduate branches of Soviet spy training. They knew the art from invisible ink to double agents and propagandists.

Therefore neither exchange was equal. The West in each case gave up a really prize catch for a person of small spy-business value. Wynnes and Powerses theoretically are more expendable and replaceable than Abels and Lonsdales.

In each case the West found itself boxed into the unequal exchange for a reason which operates in the West but not in Communist countries. In a Communist country the public does not even know that the individual has disappeared. Even if the public did know, it would have no way of demanding a repatriation.

In the West the public knows. It knew that Mr. Powers was shot down and promptly demanded, in effect, that he be ransomed. The British public knew that Mr. Wynne had been arrested and sent to jail. It, too, demanded ransoming. The press kept the Wynne story going and the public conscious and agitated.

In these two cases, Washington and London suffered the same constant pressure from press and public to get the prisoner released. A price had to be paid, and was paid.

In this sort of thing the West always of necessity is at a disadvantage.

But there is another side to the coin. Moscow could put a premium value on Messrs. Wynne and Powers because of the humanitarian angle, but they badly wanted to get their own boys home again. It is not a good advertisement for their spies to be languishing in Western jails. It reminds people that big-time Soviet spies have been caught.

The truth of the matter is that in the spy-catching business the West has been doing rather better of late than the Soviets. They have lost several real equivalents of James Bond. The West loses messenger boys.

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