

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 1WASHINGTON MONTHLY  
October 1985

## LETTERS

### Why they spy

Despite its useful gathering of statistics on our overburdened security clearance system, William McGowan's article, "Why We Can't Catch More Spies" (July/August), greatly oversimplifies one key aspect of security investigations—spy motivation. His worthy proposal to "eliminate, or at least reduce, the bureaucratic and personal pressures that produce too much classification, too many clearances, sloppy investigation, and too little reinvestigation," while useful to security needs on a cost-efficiency basis, will not prevent replays of the Walker case.

There is simply not enough evidence to support the well-intentioned opinions that money is the master motive of spies today. The Soviets may be paying more for American secrets, but then so are other foreign powers. For every spy who receives a considerable sum over a career in spying, many other spies receive little or nothing.

The history of contemporary espionage shows that while spies may appear to spy for one major reason, there can be a bewildering variety of motives involved. There are at least *seven* general motives in spying, though it is difficult without knowing the circumstances of each individual case to rank them in importance: patriotism, or a sense of duty to one's country; ideology, including communism, a philosophy, creed, or religious belief; frustration with one's situation or life; adventure-seeking; money or greed; vanity; and coercion, including being forced to spy by blackmail, physical force, fear or indebtedness to a person or group. A person may spy for any one or a combination of these motives, but even after a spy may confess it can be difficult to determine precise motives.

Christopher Boyce and Andrew Lee, for example, were middle-class Californians arrested in the 1970s for selling U.S. spy satellite secrets to the Soviets. Money was one of the drug-dealer Lee's motives, but he was also a close friend of Boyce, who was alienated by American politics and was one of the millions of Americans employed in companies with government contracts and access to secrets. Neither Lee nor Boyce were poor or disadvantaged, and they decided to approach the Soviets.

Lie detectors, elaborate regulations, or a reduction in the number of persons with security clearances will not appreciably improve our security without also greater knowledge of the psychology of spies and a higher level of public security consciousness.

There will be no easy "solutions," and certainly those put forward by Senator Sam Nunn and Mr. McGowan will *not* be the answer. Nor will they get at the root of our security problem, which is more moral, psychological, and political than bureaucratic and mechanical. A more effective counter-espionage program can work if we take a creative approach to government research into the psychology of espionage. In the area of education, our national security can benefit from educating government employees and our citizenry about the dangers of espionage. I would include material on counter-espionage even in civics textbooks. Finally, Congress should consider stiffening penalties for espionage, strengthening the counter-espionage capabilities of the FBI, and reducing the numbers of communist bloc "diplomats" allowed to reside in our country.

DOUGLAS L. WHEELER  
Durham, New Hampshire