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# STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



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### CRITIQUES OF SOME RECENT BOOKS ON INTELLIGENCE

**MY TEN YEARS AS A COUNTERSPY.** By *Boris Morros*. (New York: The Viking Press. 1959. Pp. 248. \$3.95.)

The story told in this book is that of a Russian immigrant to the United States—the author—a person of sound educational background and musical competence, who after reaching professional heights in the entertainment and movie worlds got himself involved in espionage. According to his account, his desire to assist his aging parents in Russia led to a recruitment proposal by the Soviets for clandestine work against the United States, which he accepted under the threat of reprisals to his family. Subsequently, and quite belatedly, he came into contact with the FBI and under its guidance continued his association with the Soviet intelligence service for ten more years as a double agent or counterspy. The fruit of this effort was the dissolution of an important Soviet spy ring.

The value of the book is not the story told. Tales of the same ilk in numbers line the operational coffers of intelligence organizations throughout the world. Its true merit from a professional point of view is embodied, rather, in the operational data—those intimate, indispensable, but hard-to-come-by details—that it reveals concerning the formidable yet vulnerable chief target of U.S. counterintelligence, the Russian intelligence service. The validity of this assessment becomes immediately clear when one considers the cost in time, money, and personnel of procuring such details through other clandestine operations. Yet here are intimate and damaging data on RIS objectives, personnel, modus operandi, and vulnerabilities overtly available for the modest price of a book. The obvious conclusion is that the coordination of overt and covert information remains an important and obligatory aspect of the intelligence process.

The Communist cause is more than a political creed; it is a religion to an otherwise atheistic group. Its devotees are or are supposed to be dedicated men who preach and live by the credo that selflessness is the cornerstone of their religion. The concept of the Cause as overriding all considerations of per-

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sonal loyalty and ordinary ethics is illustrated in passages like the following:

"How in hell did Myra—who, like you, pretends to be my friend—write that terrible report about Katerina?" "What else could she do? She only did it for your own good."

Myra looked like a full-blooded passionate woman. I am sure that if it had been necessary for the sake of the Cause to be unfaithful to her husband, she would not hesitate to give herself.

I never got a chance to use that Sunday punch because of what he said next: "No matter what the Communists do, I'll always be true to them, ideologically."

Korotkov's affection for his old friend was truly sincere. I am convinced of that. . . . But then he asked, "What in the world can I do if he continues to cause me so much trouble?" "Oh, he will come out of it in time," I said. "And if he does not? I suppose then there will be nothing for me to do but order him liquidated."

[Comment on Beria's arrest:] "After all, to preserve the system requires continuous examination and re-examination of each of us."

It is important for the intelligence professional to understand this religion and the Marxist code of ethics, for they permeate the relations among Communists, the attitude of the intelligence center toward its agents, their operations, and even the conduct of the lowliest sub-source on the intelligence totem pole. In them lies the secret to their thinking and behavior. They are a source both of great strength and of critical vulnerability. For the utter self-abnegation required by the Cause is something more—or less—than human. This human vulnerability is illustrated in Morros' words:

If a man like Soble is useful to his masters in Moscow, he is also an ever present danger to them. They have no choice; they must use men like him, and the Jack Sobles, no matter how often they are put through the psychological meat-grinders, remain *men*. Like everyone else, like all people everywhere, they have their vanity and pride, their weaknesses and strengths.

"Idealists, you see," said General Korotkov, "have something soft in them always . . . and that soft side exposed to sufficient temptation will corrupt them."

If it were up to [Korotkov], he would not let one of his men stay in America for more than a year. He said the

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capitalist regime, with its easy living and emphasis on false values, was too corrupting.

[Soble] was pulled both ways. He believed with all his heart in the "Communist ideal." At the same time he wished to take his wife and son out of the ever-present danger that was an integral part of his role as a secret agent operating in a foreign country. The two dreams he nourished for the future were dragging him in opposite directions.

The clue to the strange fate that caught up with Jack Soble may lie in his passionate love for his son and his wife. In the non-Communist world this sort of devotion is accepted as the norm. In the Soviet world it is regarded with deep distrust. If a man lets family love interfere with his duties to the state, the Kremlin considers his usefulness ended.

Moscow recognizes well this vulnerability in the persistent humanness of human nature, but its corrective efforts serve only to create other vulnerabilities, the rigidity of strong centralization and the resentment created by its mistrust of its people:

"People back Home sat there with their maps, deciding what should be done in a certain city and how it should be done, even though they had never been in the United States themselves. . . . No detail of the plans they make at Home can be changed without permission. . . . They should know by this time that emergencies arise even in a checker game that one cannot foresee."

They are always testing you, trying to find out if your sympathies have shifted, listening for the chance remark that will betray a weakness or character flaw. . . . Even when their conversation appears casual, there is some purpose behind it.

These contacts, I was soon to find out, were continually being changed. The NKVD never trusted even its own people very far, did not believe it wise or safe to leave any secret agent in the same city for any great length of time.

Reviewing the Soviet intelligence effort as portrayed in this book, we observe specific differences between it and the parallel operations conducted by Western powers—the Soviet stress on sex both as a tool for the control of women agents and in the procurement of information from men; the regular use of threats for recruitment and control of agents; the extensive countersurveillance mounted over rendezvous and tête-à-tête; murder as a means of agent disposal. But in broader view we

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find that the principal difference lies in the insecurity of Soviet operatives stemming from their continual struggle to remain human beings under the demands of an autocratic, inflexible, and unrealistic credo that seeks to convert them into unquestioning instruments of the Cause.

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