



Boris Solomatin in his Moscow apartment: "Why is it honorable for you to spy on us, but not for us to spy on you?" Page 18.

FEATURES

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Question: What happens when a hard-working young couple with two kids try to get by on \$20,000 a year? Answer: They get in trouble and need help. Next question: Can they—and American society—turn around this trend toward downward mobility? **BY WALT HARRINGTON**



18

He talks like a John le Carre character, but Boris Aleksandrovich Solomatin was the real thing: a top-ranking Soviet intelligence officer who oversaw crucial anti-American spy operations. Now, in a rare interview, he offers a vivid look back at the intelligence wars **BY PETE EARLEY**

On the cover: Dan and Sara Sullivan with their sons, Patrick and Connor; photograph by David Barry  
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TOP PHOTOGRAPH BY NIKOLAI KNATHIEV-MATRIX; BOTTOM LEFT BY CHARLES LEFORD; RIGHT BY CHRIS HARTLOVE

# INTERVIEW WITH THE SPY MASTER

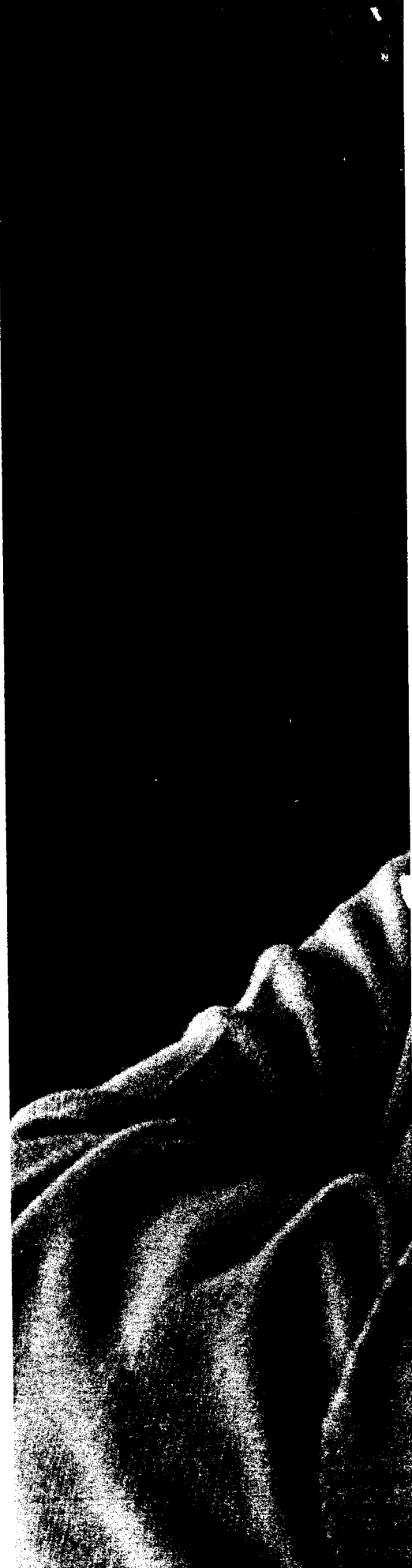
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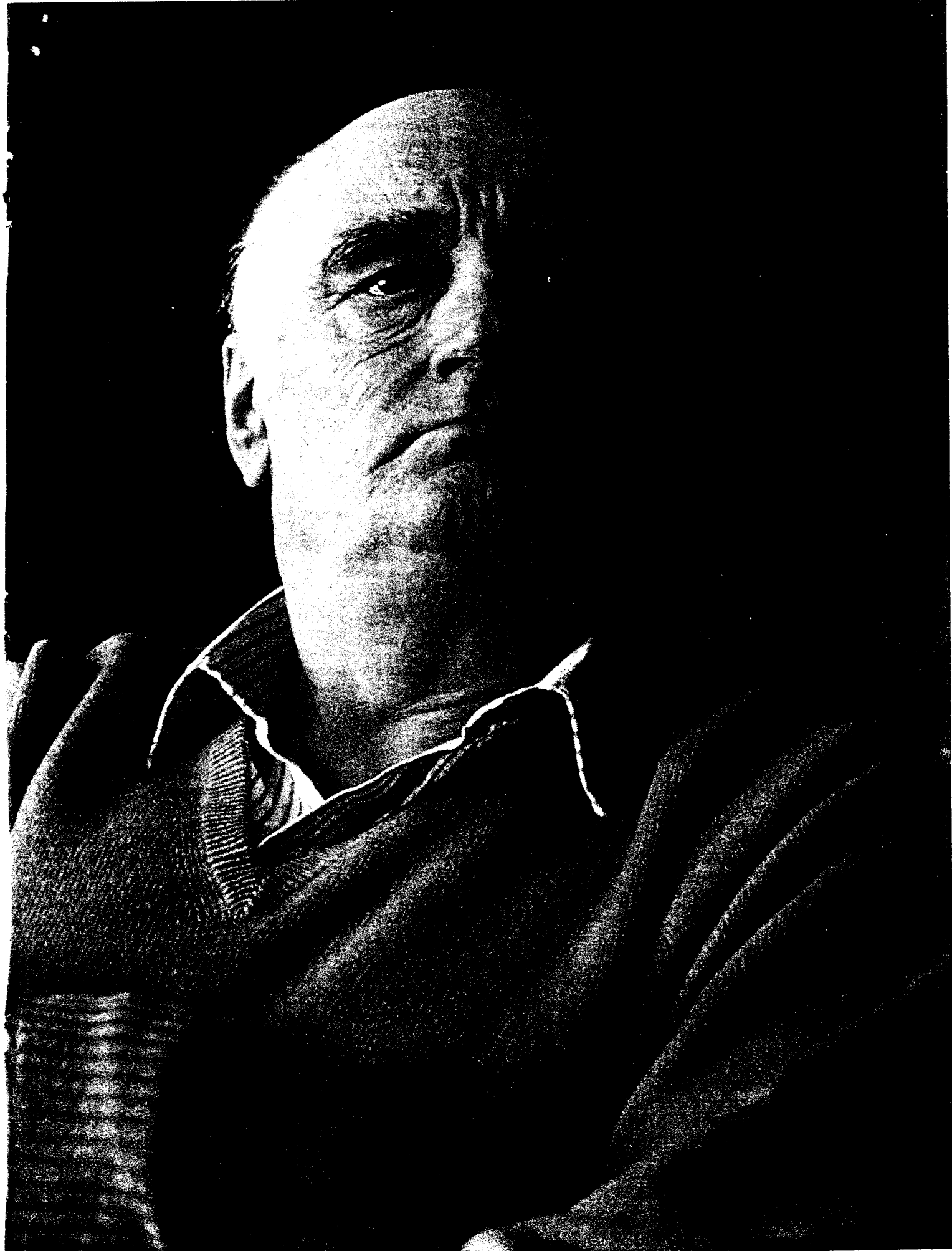
FOR NEARLY 20 YEARS during the height of the Cold War, Boris Aleksandrovich Solomatin oversaw most of the KGB's anti-American spy operations. The now-retired major general played a key role in the "handling" of John Walker Jr., the Navy officer who headed the most damaging spy ring ever to operate against the United States. Solomatin also recruited Glenn Michael Souther, a lesser-known Navy officer,

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**By PETE  
EARLEY**

who provided the KGB with some of America's nuclear war plans before





**Q.** How did you know that he was not a double agent sent by the CIA or FBI?

**A.** Of course they are constantly sending us double agents, people who pretend. But Walker showed us a monthly key list [codes] for one of your military cipher machines. This was extraordinary, and I immediately decided to take a major risk. Please keep in mind that the resident, or KGB chief, just as a CIA chief of station, as a rule, does not talk directly to volunteers who come into an embassy. But in this case, Walker was offering us ciphers [codes], which are the most important aspect of intelligence.

**Q.** The ultimate targets?

**A.** Precisely. I decided personally to talk to him, to get my own impression, so that I could decide if we wanted to work with him in the future. I should say here that I like risk—at least risks that seem to me to be reasonable. I'm sure that without risk there can be no real productive intelligence. Hundreds of the intelligence officers—ours and Americans—who do not wish to run a risk still happily live after retirement. Often they are simply lazy. That's one of the problems in intelligence. In ours, in yours.

So I spit on all the rules and regulations and met with Walker face to face for two hours with only the two of us present. Of course, during the first meeting I couldn't be totally sure that Walker was not a double agent, but somehow I felt that he was not one. Let me explain a little bit of spycraft to you. To implant a double agent into a competing intelligence service is very difficult and expensive. Though there are many attempts at this, the success, to my opinion, as a rule, is minimal.

During my career, I could have been or must have been a victim of several double-agent cases—men who pretended to be spies. But after two or three of my people's meetings with them, I happily recognized them for what they were. The trick for a KGB agent to avoid being fooled is first of all to know enough about America to know what is secret and what is not secret. And that question often can be answered by asking this question: Is the information being offered to me going to damage the country of the person giving it? For instance, in the case of John Walker, I knew that Norfolk was the East Coast main base for the U.S. naval fleet. I didn't know at the time much, but after meeting Walker I studied your Navy in detail. Also I did not and still do not know of a single instance when any intelligence service has used as a double agent a man with a sample of cryptography. Ciphers and code machines are too important, too sensitive for anyone to risk, even if they came up with a false example. Ciphers are too serious. The intelligence service cannot allow itself a game around such a serious matter.

There is something else to remember. Even if one service is feeding another service rubbish, a wise intelligence officer can learn much from that rubbish. Whether they send you true or false information, the fact that they send anything is a clue to how they think.

So when I saw the ciphers, which seemed to be real, I suspected that Walker was not a double agent.

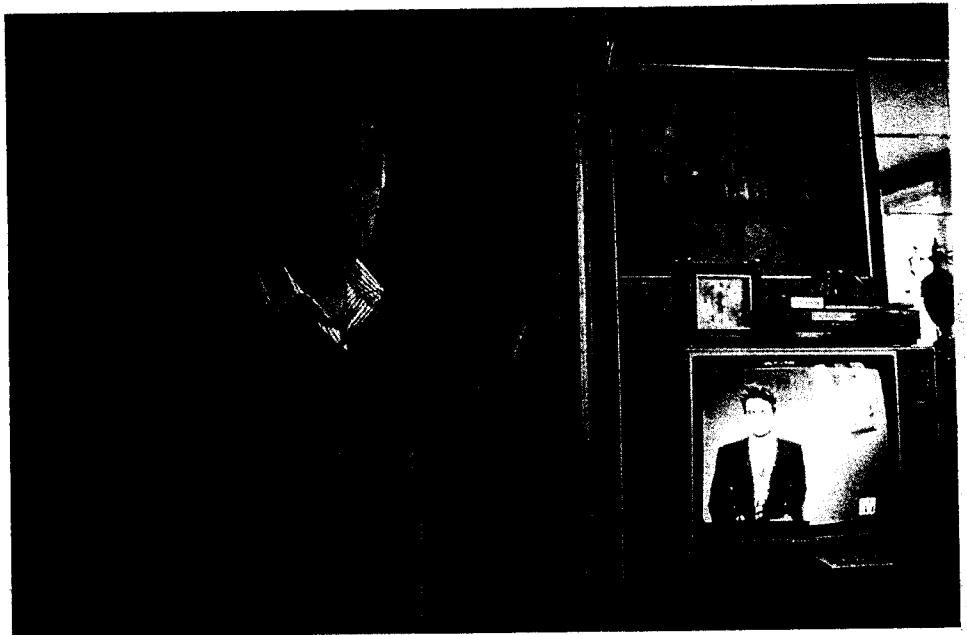
**Q.** When did John Walker first walk into the Soviet Embassy? He claims that he can't remember and the FBI has never been certain. This date could be important.

**A.** I am surprised that he has forgotten. I didn't keep a diary, but

this date I could never forget because of what followed. It was in October 1967.

**Q.** That is much earlier than anyone has ever reported. It means that he spied for the KGB from late 1967 until mid-1985, more than 17 years. That must be a record. It also means that he became a spy three months before the USS Pueblo was seized off the coast of North Korea in January 1968. We know that the North Koreans captured an actual KW-7 cipher machine from that spy ship. At the time, the KW-7 was the most widely used code machine in the entire U.S. military. The Navy, Army, Marines, Air Force, even the CIA used it to send messages. If Walker gave you the codes and the North Koreans gave you the actual machine, then you had everything you needed to read our military secrets. Did they give you that machine?

**A.** I don't make out of myself a man who knows everything in intelligence—as some former officers of the First Department who



**Boris Solomatin, now retired, lives in a building reserved for former top KGB officers.**

have written their books try to do. In intelligence and counterintelligence only the man who is heading these services knows everything. I am saying this because all the questions concerning ciphers and cipher machines were under another department—in a directorate outside of mine, similar to your National Security Agency, which is quite separate from your CIA. But this much I will say. Whether or not the North Koreans gave us a working KW-7 machine is really of no importance. How can I say this? Because in your own book about John Walker, your *Family of Spies*, you say that he and his best friend, Jerry Whitworth, provided the KGB with the technical drawings that we needed to construct a working KW-7 machine and later other code machines. Walker has admitted to your FBI that he did this. Do you understand what this means, the significance of this compromise? For more than 17 years, Walker enabled your enemies to read your most sensitive military secrets. We knew everything! There has never been a security breach of this magnitude and length in the history of espionage. Seventeen years we were able to read your cables!

Everyone in the Western world knows about John Walker. There were four books about him published in your country. There was a film, hundreds of news articles, and so on. Everybody knows but the Soviet people. Nothing was ever written here. Why? I ask you. I ask myself.

Perhaps for some in Russia, the 1960s and the beginning of the 1980s were the years of social stagnation. That is what we call it here—no progress, no improvement, just stagnation. But as the John Walker affair shows, this was not true for the Soviet intelligence service. We regularly supplied the Soviet leadership with first-class information. How effectively was this information used? That is not for me to say. All an intelligence professional can do is provide the information to a political leader. By the way, this problem is not only the Soviet problem, but I am sure the problem of your country, too. We can only give what we know to our leaders, we cannot force them to act.

**Q.** So was John Walker the KGB's most important spy—is that what you are saying?

**A.** Was he the most important? The question has been put not correctly. Each serious source has his own specialization and to choose from them only one would not be right. As far as military strategic information is concerned—specifically information about the main component of the U.S. atomic triad, the submarines with atomic rockets—yes, he perhaps was most important. During the Cold War, you were considered our main enemy, and, at the time when the nerves of the rulers of both superpowers were strained to the limit, it was then that we depended on what Walker provided us. I will quote from your own documents, the memorandum for the trial that your former director of Navy intelligence, Admiral [William] Studeman provided to the court. I'll quote: "Walker created powerful war-winning implications for the Soviet side." You Americans like to call him the "spy of the decade." Perhaps you are right.

**Q.** Why didn't you use this information to your advantage and attack the United States?

**A.** This is a silly question. Why do you assume that this information is only important if we were to attack? There is an irony here, which you overlook. In a way, John Walker helped both countries avoid a nuclear disaster. How? you ask. Because he enabled us to understand your true intentions. It was impossible for you to bluff when we were reading your cables. This helped us determine when you were willing to fight and when you were simply puffing up your cheeks. This is an aspect of spying that often is overlooked. Sometimes it is good that both sides know what the other is really doing.

**Q.** How were you able to keep the Walker ring a secret for so long?

**A.** I don't see anything unusual in this, particularly since we had the help of your side.

**Q.** What do you mean—because the Navy was so careless with security?

**A.** Not only the Navy. The FBI also. There are FBI people sitting across the street from our embassy in Washington taking photo-

graphs of everyone—yet they see nothing. Okay? Seriously now, how was this possible? First of all, it took place because all of our work on our side was properly done. I should say at the highest level. The work of our center in Moscow and Walker's handlers—everyone made certain that he was protected. The FBI has put our instructions to Walker on display. Each direction to a dead drop [document exchange] was precisely written and given to him in three different ways to ensure that he understood them.

**Q.** Yes, your people were very detailed.

**A.** We also limited the number of people who knew about him. I should say that in the center in Moscow, only the people at the very top, just a handful, were told. All of these very serious steps led to the fact that there never was any transmission of any information about him made to the Americans. And it worked. We now know that the CIA had spies working for it within our government—even in our own KGB department! They could have exposed Walker if they had learned about him. So the fact that Walker was never exposed by us shows that we did our job well. In my opinion, there were actually perhaps no mistakes with Walker. And he could have continued to make us happy up until today if it were not for his own mistakes—his lavish spending, his problems with his wife, etc.

**Q.** Did you share the information that Walker provided to you with any other countries? Specifically, did the North Vietnamese know in advance about our bombing targets during the war because the KGB was reading our military secrets?

**A.** I understand that this question is very important for you and there are many speculations on this subject. In my time, there was a practice of handing over some intelligence information by the leading country—say, the Soviet Union—to the allies in the Warsaw Pact or to other countries of the so-called socialist camp. Vietnam was not a member of the Warsaw Pact, but it was one of the so-called socialist camp. So the matter of transmitting this kind of information was controlled at the very highest level. This would only be done with the sanction of one of the deputies of the chief of the First Department. I was one of them. So I know for myself what was done. I will tell you then that the information which was given to our allies, the socialist countries, was not much. It was always told in very general terms. You can presume that we were especially eager to protect a source such as Walker.

**Q.** You weren't going to tip off anybody about him?

**A.** Precisely. The handing over to the Vietnamese, in any form, of information or data which we got from Walker was contrary to our own interests because it could lead to him being exposed. And to run the risk in this would be silly. Forgive us, but here we first were thinking about our own interests. I'm sure that if the Americans were in our place, they would do the same. Judging from what I told you just now, you should make a writer's opinion, and if you decide that the information from Walker was not handed over to the North Vietnamese or our other allies, you will be making the correct one. Don't make guilty a man in what he is not guilty.

*continued on page 27*

THIS, TOO, IS DAN'S PLAN, the Dan who still hears a different drummer, Dan the dreamer: For the last few years, he has been creating a role-playing adventure game with Sara and two friends. Dan believes it's better than Dungeons & Dragons. He has devised far more elaborate charts to determine the strength, charisma, constitution, dexterity, willpower, wisdom, swordsmanship, appearance and intelligence of his game's characters.

Dan has set his game in 5th century North America. He has studied the geography of the land and populated his fantasy world with Native Americans and fictitious European explorers. All his charts, maps and instructions will be run off on a friend's Macintosh computer and put into three-ring binders. "One book, 35 bucks," says Dan, which is dirt cheap compared with some fantasy games. Dan plans to have his game finished and copyrighted by the end of the summer and then take it to Wheaton's Barbarian Book Shop, whose owner has agreed to sell it on consignment.

"Gas money," says Dan, smiling.

SATURDAY NIGHT, and Dan has a surprise for Sara: a \$3.95 bottle of Manischewitz Concord Grape wine. On Monday morning, he starts at the Rockville Pike Radio Shack. Besides the promise of an extra \$200 a month, the store offers a bonus—it's five miles closer to home, which means Dan will save about \$2.50 on gas each week. Just over the horizon are a frightening loss and a swift recovery: Sara will lose her job at the Holiday Inn, then find another—after just one interview—at Evans, starting at \$6.50 an hour with good insurance benefits and daytime hours. But that's in their always uncertain future. Tonight, Dan takes the candles down from the tall bookcase that once belonged to Sara's mother, puts them on the dining room table that Sara's sister gave them, lights the candles and pours Sara a glass of wine. Then he cooks dinner—grilled hot-dog-and-cheese sandwiches, with macaroni and cheese and a tossed green salad.

Dan says grace, which he's doing more often lately. He has told Sara that perhaps God will help them if they become more faithful to Him: "The Lord restored the prosperity of Job." The kids are in bed. It is a quiet and comfortable evening. "Once all this is over," Dan has told Sara, "I think we'll be so much closer." They eat dinner and clear the table. Dan pours Sara another glass of wine. Then they sit before the 13-inch TV on the long, worn, green couch, with its plastic innards beginning to poke through and prick their skin, and they watch "Jurassic Park," a movie they have watched more than a dozen times before. ■

## SOLOMATIN

*continued from page 22*

Because I understand how our different countries work, I will presume that there will be those in your country who will not believe me when I say that Walker is not responsible for your failures in bombing in North Vietnam. To hell with them. I tell you what I know, and logic should tell you it is true. Walker was too important to us to ever risk his exposure.

**Q.** Did his arrest surprise you?

**A.** Yes, of course, and no. Every arrest is more or less unexpected and expected. Not because of what we do, but because of what the people who work for us do. Everyone is counseled and warned, but they do not listen, they seldom do. It is part of their personalities not to listen to our warnings.

**Q.** What do you mean by that?

**A.** In my opinion, Walker was not an ordinary man. He was a talented man, to be sure. He possessed a good sense of humor, was intelligent. He always wanted to be the one in the center of attention and he was ambitious without limits, was shameless, and even cynical. As happens with such people, he was let down by his own extreme self-assurances. Now listen attentively to my words. The character traits that made him such a successful spy for us were also the main sources that led to his capture. And this is always the truth when it comes to such men. They become careless because they believe that they are wiser than their peers, more talented, even invulnerable.

**Q.** Is there a difference between the Russians who betray their country and Americans who commit treason? Are their motives and personalities different?

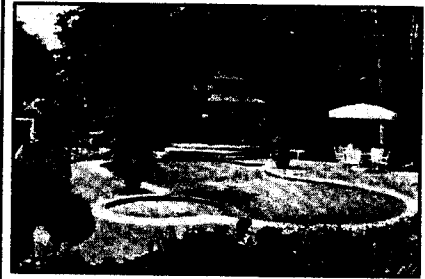
**A.** Yes, there are great differences. Our traitors are really traitors, and these who you call your traitors, well, we call them good-willed people. [Laughs.] That is what both sides do. They see what they want to see. We make heroes of those who help us and give them medals, and curse those who betray us.

As far as the motives, there is no romance here. It is always for the money. There was one person with me who was different, and this was Souther. He came to us not for money. He really believed in the superiority of our ideology, and so did Kim Philby, the famous British spy. But nowadays they are the exceptions. Most spies are men who sell their souls for cash.

**Q.** Do you think the Russian government owes anything to John Walker?

**A.** I should say when answering this question that possible steps on the part of our

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government to help John Walker are not my responsibility. But it is rather late for Walker to ask us now for help. What can we do? But the history of our intelligence service shows that we always help our friends. This is true of him and will also be true of men who followed him.

**Q.** Do you mean Aldrich Ames, who the KGB supposedly still owes \$1 million?

**A.** You must draw your own conclusions here. But we do not turn our backs on our friends.

**Q.** Please let me ask a few more questions about the Walker spy ring. John recruited his best friend, Jerry Whitworth, his own brother, Arthur Walker, and later on groomed his own son, Michael Walker, to spy. Who caused the most damage?

**A.** John and Jerry Whitworth were both very, very important. I cannot compare between the two of them, but my opinion is that there is absolutely no comparison between the information given by them and these other two fellows—the brother and the son. Their information was inferior. Nothing compares with ciphers, which is what Walker and Whitworth gave us. I do not even remember anything of interest being given to us by the brother.

**Q.** Let's talk about Aldrich Ames, even though you say that you know nothing about the case. Your résumé shows that you were still the deputy of the First Department in 1985 when Ames first began to spy for the KGB.

**A.** My government has never said that Ames was a spy. Your CIA violated this rule when Vitaly Yurchenko [a high-ranking KGB agent] defected to the United States. Director [William] Casey told everyone that Yurchenko had become a U.S. spy, and that was very foolish. It creates legal problems back home for the families of the spy. The only reason why I have discussed Walker is because there appeared some distorted stories about the Walker case in the books and in the press.

**Q.** Let me speak hypothetically: If Ames were a KGB spy, how would you compare the information that he provided to what John Walker provided?

**A.** I would not compare the Ames affair with the Walker affair. Why? Because they operated in different fields of intelligence. Walker supplied military strategic information, ciphers. And, judging by newspaper accounts, Ames mostly gave the information in the field of counterintelligence—the names of Russians working as CIA agents. Of course, both of these people were sources of important information, judging from the media reports. But the results were much different.

Information from Ames would have been used to identify traitors. That is a one-time event. But Walker's information not only provided us with ongoing intelligence, but helped us over time to understand and study how your military actually thinks.

**Q.** Do you believe the two men have similar personalities?

**A.** You have met both. Perhaps you should answer your own question. [Laughs.] The personality of Ames is not known to me, so I cannot make any comparison with Walker. Still, in my opinion, one may say that there is something common between these personalities. First of all, both were adventurous types. Both wanted money. And, finally, both of them made a lot of mistakes which caused their arrests.

**Q.** Ames blames the KGB for his arrest. Your people began rounding up the CIA's spies and executing them as soon as Ames provided their names. He says it was like putting a big sign over CIA headquarters that read "MOLE."

**A.** My friend, Ames was not arrested until 1994. He began in 1985, according to his own statements. Is your CIA really so incompetent? No, it was not the KGB. Something else happened well after 1985 that led to his arrest.

**Q.** Do you mean a leak of some sort?

**A.** It is not something which I know. But I would like to say a few words about the atmosphere which was created after the arrest of Ames. You will remember that all of America was furious at Russia. You will remember the angry statement that President Clinton made about our spying. You will remember that he ordered several of our people out of your country and that he even sent a special CIA team to Moscow where it demanded to look into our very files. You will remember the angry speeches in Congress and the threats about cutting U.S. aid. So I would like to ask you: "What is all this fuss about?" Stop and think. Do you really expect us Russians to believe that there is a quiet, little, nice monastery in Langley, Virginia [CIA headquarters], where good, harmless monks spend their time in prayers? Gentlemen, before making all these loud protests, better to look at yourself. Why were the Russians—who Ames supposedly exposed—executed and jailed? The answer is simple: because they were spying on the Russian people. And who were they spying for? The CIA and the very government and very president who now is so outraged because Ames was caught spying for us. Why is it honorable for you to spy on us, but not for us to spy on you?

One point more: In my opinion, a great power like the United States should admit

its defeat with self-respect and not protest in front of the whole world when someone like Ames is caught. A great power should not act like a child who stamps the ground when somebody deprives him of his new toy. I would hope your leaders remember the cases of [Oleg] Penkovsky, [Dimitri] Polyakov and [Adolf] Tolkachev [Russians caught spying for the West] and many others. I think you should follow our example. We took all these defeats without hysteria and with dignity.

**Q.** Yes, you also executed them.

**A.** That was our law at the time. I do not tell you what to do with Walker or with Ames. Are there not many in America who wish them to be executed?

**Q.** Now that the Cold War is over, do you believe that the United States and Russia will stop spying on each other?

**A.** The activity of both intelligence services will not stop and never will. But the end of the Cold War gives us an opportunity to put an end to uncivilized methods. Do you understand this?

**Q.** Please explain yourself.

**A.** Our countries should set limits—what can be done and what cannot be done in intelligence. There should be in existence a moral and ethical code which should apply to all countries. For instance, we should fully renounce such methods as using force to recruit somebody.

**Q.** Do you mean threatening them?

**A.** Yes, physical threats, blackmail. All this should be excluded. We should end the use of psychotropic medicines. We should not use desperate covert actions which can and often do disturb the whole world. I'm talking about the overthrowing of governments and assassinations of world leaders, extreme propaganda campaigns, terrorism. I should say that many of these actions are hardly put into practice now, especially by the new Russian intelligence.

**Q.** You think the CIA uses such techniques?

**A.** Read your history books. Your own congressional investigations showed that they did. But most practices like these are rare today. It's my opinion. You may or may not agree with me. But I think so. I know how it worked when I was in charge and how it works now. My point is this: It would be good to have some sort of recognized standards for worldwide intelligence operations for all the nations to follow in defending their national interests.

**Q.** Some people say that the United States and Russia should sign an agreement not to spy on each other. My country does not

spy on some of its allies, such as Great Britain.

**A.** This is foolish talk. It is nonsense. Why? Because such an agreement is not possible. First of all, the world is interconnected. Supposing we sign such an agreement, aren't you forgetting that the United States is part of NATO? Is Great Britain or Holland, for instance, going to stop spying on us, too, or will it not simply exchange this information with the U.S. through NATO? That is why such an idea is a fantasy. If such an agreement were signed, it would lead to worldwide scandals and conflicts because no one would follow it, and when they were caught, there would be even more outrage and repercussions.

**Q.** Which does a better job of spying—the CIA or KGB?

**A.** I must speak frankly here. Professionally, I have always envied the guys from CIA, who, without making any efforts, get mountains of information from our former intelligence officers who came over to the opulent West. I have never felt that the playing field is level. If the CIA was deprived of its wealth, I do not believe that it would be as successful as it has been. Do not forget, we did not have as much money and yet we have handed you two major defeats.

**Q.** Okay, who was the Russian equivalent of John Walker and Aldrich Ames? What Western spy has caused your country the most damage?

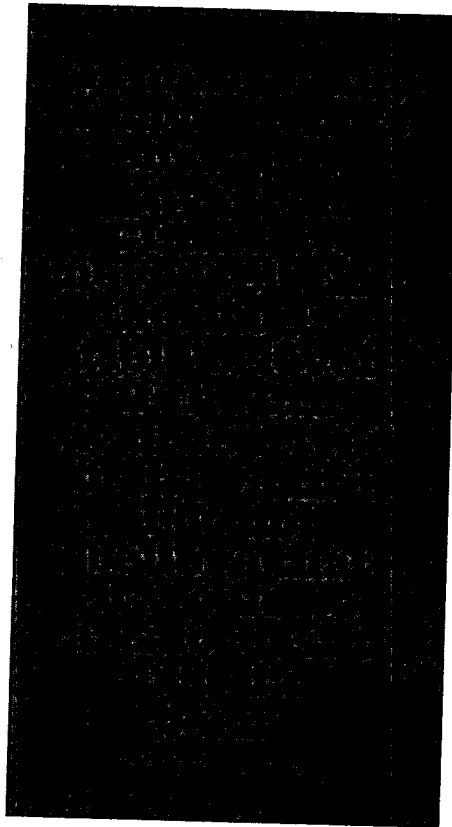
**A.** My immediate answer is perhaps Oleg Gordievsky. [Gordievsky spied for the British and was identified for the KGB by Aldrich Ames in 1985. He escaped to London, where he still lives. In 1990, he coauthored a book, *KGB: The Inside Story*, in which he told the history of the KGB and identified several hundred of its agents, including Solomatin.] He is a common criminal and typical traitor who sold out his fatherland and his colleagues simply to secure for himself a comfortable life. One reason why I detest him is that he now says that he betrayed his fatherland because he was always against totalitarianism. He mocks the real people in this country who stayed here and fought to change the system without fleeing the country or committing treason.

But there is another unpunished traitor in our midst. His name is Vitaly Yurchenko. I don't know the opinion of today's leaders of foreign intelligence of the Yurchenko case. But I will tell you my personal feelings and, as far as I know, the views of rank-and-file intelligence officers in the KGB. Forgive me for rudeness, but Yurchenko is a typical son of a bitch. A clear example of a traitor. There are some reasons to think that he was preparing to flee to the West long before he did it in 1985.

His official version about how he was kidnapped by the CIA is a fairy tale for weak-headed persons—persons such as Kryuchkov, who was in charge of the KGB at the time when Yurchenko at first defected.

**Q.** Some in my country believe Yurchenko was intentionally sent by the KGB to the United States to help keep Aldrich Ames from being exposed. They believe that he came over to deflect the suspicion onto Edward Lee Howard [a former CIA employee who was a Russian spy]. That is why Yurchenko was allowed to return to Russia after three months without being executed.

**A.** Yurchenko says he was drugged and kid-



napped by the CIA. I don't know a single proved case of kidnapping of the Soviet people by Americans. It sounds good. But it doesn't happen, and not because the American special services consist of only righteous people who would not do such a thing. They simply are afraid that we will retaliate, and they are afraid rightly.

Having told the CIA all that was known to him in Washington, D.C., Yurchenko changed his mind about staying in the United States and asked to be received back in Moscow. This man told the CIA valuable information about his colleagues and sources. He was not sent by anyone to protect Aldrich Ames. This is fantasy. And yet when Yurchenko returned to Moscow, he was treated like a hero at a mean-spirited press conference.

**Q.** Mean-spirited?

**A.** Yes. Mean-spirited. The main producer of this show was Kryuchkov, who was merely trying to save his own skin. Why? Because Yurchenko had fled under his watch. They made a traitor into a victim. It's ridiculous and horrible, and if Yurchenko had any honor, he would confess, bare his soul, ask for forgiveness and voluntarily go to jail.

**Q.** So is Yurchenko the worst, or is Gordievsky?

**A.** In truth, neither. The real and greatest traitors in my country are the people who have deprived me and my fellow countrymen of my former motherland in which I was born and for which I fought and worked in intelligence. And they did this by tearing it into pieces. They destroyed a superpower and humiliated my nation. I consider Kryuchkov to be one of these traitors.

**Q.** Are you including people such as Mikhail Gorbachev and other reformers?

**A.** I am not a politician. But I look around. Everything has been destroyed. My father and mother are buried in Odessa. That is a Ukrainian town now. Now it's foreign land for me! Do you know what it is like to have to go to a different country to see your parents' grave? I will never forgive these people for what they have done to my country. Whether they are communists or anti-communists, I don't care.

**Q.** So it's not an issue of being communist or of restoring communism, it's the idea that they dismantled your nation?

**A.** Three generations lived under communism. It failed. I admit it. It is clear that it was an unhappy experiment. How many times can you experiment on the lives of the people? But why did we have to dismantle everything, change everything, destroy everything?

I love my country and what it was, though it needed some radical changes. How would you Americans feel if the United States was dismantled? If, suddenly, New York was a different country from Washington, D.C., and you would not be allowed to move freely from one state to another? This is the ultimate treason that I can never forgive or forget. It grieves me to think that the ultimate destruction of my country came not from outside forces, but from within, by its own leaders. Yes, they are the real traitors. ■

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