

## Wanted: Secret Service Files

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One hundred kilometers from Moscow, Boris was sitting, waiting with 48 years of secret service knowledge at his fingertips, waiting for somebody willing to pay his price.

He is only asking for 70,000 rubles (\$2,400) plus a new life in a country of his choice, and perhaps some of those nice clothes they wear in "Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy."

That is a small exaggeration: Boris is only asking for the money.

He is not a spy, just an avid spy fan who — fascinated with the secret services of the world — began collecting clips from newspapers when he was 17 years old. This was the early Brezhnev era, so it was stories of the dastardly deeds done by Western secret service agents, spies captured there, capitalist plots here.

He was advertising his scrap books in the biweekly Bolshoi Gorod. There are 44 in total, painstakingly cut out from newspapers and magazines over the last five decades. He was quite happy to discuss his hobby on the phone.

The one time I met someone who had access to secret service papers — he wanted me to ghost write his book — he told me only ever to phone him in the future from phone booths.

Have you ever tried to buy a phone card in Moscow these days? It'd be easier to get access to the portable toilet that was mysteriously placed on the roof of the Lubyanka this summer and that could be seen from the pavement below.

Boris did not mind talking by mobile. His pronunciation of CIA and MI5 was impeccable, and he named a French agency for which no judgment was coming.

"It's all propaganda," he said of the stories he had collected, "On both sides."

He has no favorites among the agency, "They can all mess up."

He himself did come across the secret services, the Soviets at least, more than once when he worked as a trade representative abroad. In logistics. Transport, he said. A cover story, I thought, so bad it must be true.

He was living in Italy in 1981 when Pope John Paul II was shot by a Turkish assassin in the Vatican, allegedly on the orders of the KGB.

"Were you in Rome?"

"No, Turin," he said without even pausing.

When asked about Anna Chapman, he said she was the Christine Keeler of her day, talking of the English showgirl who was caught up in the Profumo affair a year before he began collecting his spy stories.

Boris is in need of money, and perhaps a chat about spies. Not that he is going to miss the scrapbooks either, as he has plenty of other spy material.

"I still have my library of about 1,500 books," he said.

I'm sure he has lots of other stories he didn't tell, too.

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