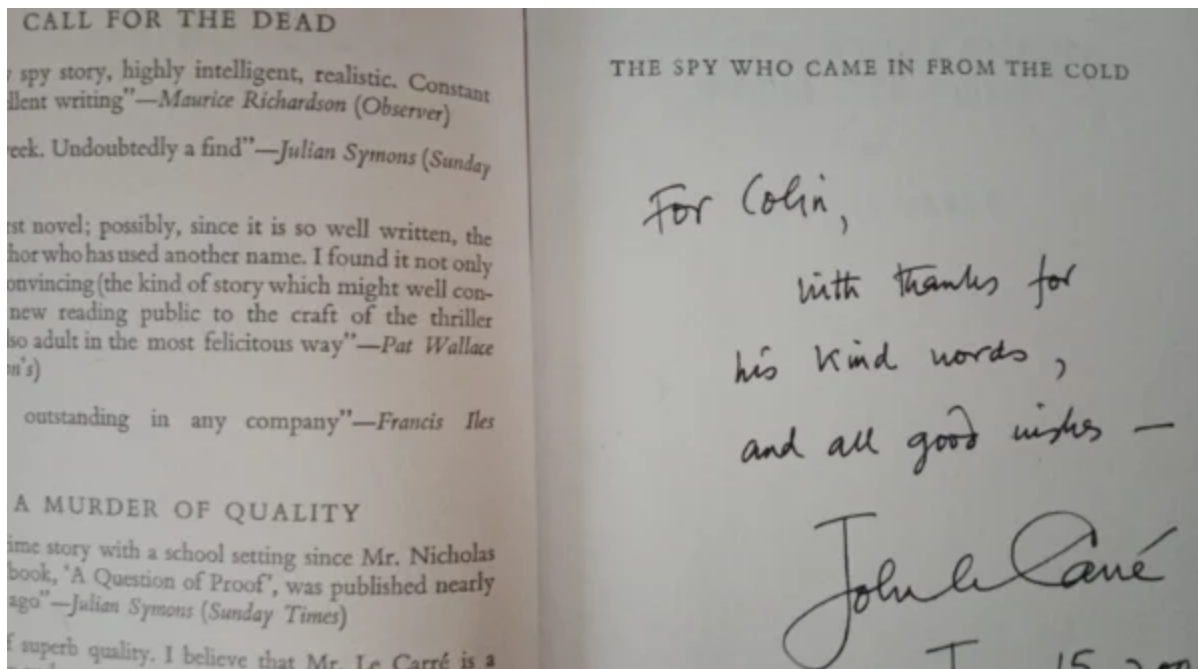


Greetings Club Member

When the late John le Carré (real name David Cornwell) burst onto the scene in 1963 with *The Spy Who Came In from the Cold*, he'd just written one of the best Cold War spy thrillers of all time. Gone were Ian Fleming's fast cars, fast women and baccarat chemin-de-fer. In their place, a world of bleak safe houses, betrayal and disillusioned agents.

le Carré knew what he was talking about. Having worked for MI5 and MI6 interrogating defectors and running agents in West Germany, he would have had deep insights into the world of espionage and spy craft, such as dead-letter drops, surveillance and interrogation techniques.

During his 58-year career he not only kept readers rapt, but inspired others like myself to write stories in settings where history and adventure collide. He also showed that protagonists needn't be one-dimensional superheroes. They can be flawed, human, even deeply torn by loyalty, fear and betrayal. It makes them more relatable. When I mentioned this to John some years ago, he inscribed his thanks in my copy of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (pictured below).



Watching *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* on Netflix the other evening was an opportunity to catch up with one of his most enduring characters: George Smiley. Described as “quiet, patient and painfully human” le Carré cleverly contrasts his ordinariness by depicting him as one of the sharpest minds in British Intelligence. I see *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* (starring Richard Burton and shot in black and white to emphasise the bleak atmosphere of Cold War espionage) is available on Google Play.

Next month I'll look at another spy who wrote: Graham Greene, whose experience in MI6 and Sierra Leone influenced his novels. And then Ian Fleming, who went from Naval Intelligence to creating the world's most famous spy.

'Till then.

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