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Spies not like us



Since John le Carré died on Sat. at the age of 89, he has often been quoted as telling the [New York Times in 2017](#) that spies "made absolutely no difference in the long run." They did not win the Cold War, he said. A careful reader of Le Carré's novels and commentary on public events (esp. war) might wonder if this isn't another of his subterfuges as an ex-intelligence officer. The big events of the Cold War were no doubt decided in Washington and Moscow, and not on the level of George Smiley, and there is no arguing with the author about this. But in his own *Karla Trilogy* he explained how Soviet spies used layer after layer of offshore companies to make clandestine payments. This expertise came in handy to the Eastern European spies and trade reps who became post-Cold War capitalists. Just read Jaroslav Kmenta's *Boss Babiš*. Spies might not have won the Cold War, but they were among its big winners. Those who weren't part of the game just aren't supposed to understand this.

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