Dr. Helen Fry | Novelists and Spies: John le Carré and Frederick Forsyth

– So today, we are going to be looking at the fictional side of what we enjoy so much about spies and espionage. And as I've said many times before, there is such a fine line between fact and fiction. I suppose it'll be quite a good project for a historian one day to look at some of the more contemporary spy writers, and spy fiction and thrillers, to work out exactly what some of their novels may potentially be based on. I know it's been done for Ian Fleming, but of course for contemporary writers, it might be actually a really good opportunity to analyse just how close they are to fact, given that there are always being files declassified that might give us a better understanding. Particularly War Office files, some MI5 files? What I will reiterate, as I've said before, MI6 does not release its files. MI6 being the British Intelligence Service responsible for gathering intelligence largely abroad, and MI5 being the security service that gathers intelligence and conducts counterespionage primarily in the United Kingdom, although not solely. Sometimes, missions have to cross over abroad. So let's have a look at some of our best loved fictional writers, our spy fiction.

I resisted the temptation, actually, to look at Ian Fleming. Perhaps I should just say a few words about Ian Fleming before we move on to the more contemporary writers because the more I delve into intelligence files that have been released, war files on secret operations during the Second World War, the hand of Ian Fleming seems to be in so many of them. Whether it's Operation Mincemeat, whether it's bugging German prisoners of war, whether it's deception plans, 30 assault unit with the smash and grab of technology and scientists at the end of the wartime, Fleming seems to be everywhere. When I was writing my book on MI9, I even found Fleming in France on the 17th of June, 1940. There, on the key site, where Churchill wanted to sink the French fleet to save the... To avoid the Germans taking the French fleet and using that... The ships. Fleming's even on the key site there, when these ships are about to be sunk. So he kind of appears everywhere. And, of course, the famous Q gadgets, the exploding pens, fast cars, the cocktails, all do have their roots in wartime espionage. And so, the more I look at those files, the closer I see to Ian Fleming's own life. If you look at GoldenEye, there is actually a file that's now been declassified about the secret operations on the island of Gibraltar. So he wrote, of course, about GoldenEye, but it actually... There is a real operation and it has now been declassified. So I think we can't get enough of that spy fiction. I grew up on Fleming, etc. I absolutely loved it, thought he was genius in his creativity. But in actual fact, much of what he's written has been drawn from his own experiences. And in a sense, that does make sense, doesn't it? But what about the others that we love? I'm looking at... We've lost the PowerPoint. Oh yes, there, it's back again.

What about John le Carré? Otherwise, the late John le Carré, known as, original name, David Cornwell, and Frederick Forsyth? I want to look at them. I want to look at Graham Greene a little bit, and try and unpack a little bit about their lives. So next slide, please. So if we turn first to... Oh, I love the works of Frederick Forsyth. I'm going to do a little bit more about him in a moment. He is now in his 80s, and I hope he will still be writing because previously, when I gave this lecture, he hadn't written the last novel, "The Fox," which you'll have heard me recommend before. Utterly, utterly brilliant. Personally, I think it's touching on one of his best, even better than "Day of the Jackal," and that's really saying something, or "The Odessa File." And you just get a sense that it's tipping into reality. I won't spoil it, but I really, really do encourage you to read The Fox, and given contemporary events, intercepting Russian ships and that kind of thing, I really think it'd be really good for you to read that. So do get hold of The Fox. And at the heart of it is an 18 year old who is on the spectrum of Asperger's, who actually, of course, manages to crack a number of secure sites, and I won't say any more than that, but British intelligence take him up. And I just love that story. And we now know that it's actually based on a true story.

Next slide, please. So before we come proper to John le Carré and Frederick Forsyth, I just want to say, of course, in the background, also, is another man whose popular works, Graham Greene, have, in a way, fueled part of this love of espionage, that gritty Cold War world of the shadows. I think, for me, whether it's the Cold War proper, or whether it's fictionalised versions of Cold War espionage, to me, it seems a very different world than the Second World War. And I'm not sure if that's because so much of it still potentially remains classified, but you just have a sense of the shadows and the mirrors, the trilby hats and the trench coats, that, of course, you probably did get in the Second World War, but I think it's very, very different. So Graham Greene was a very close friend of Kim Philby. We've done a little bit in the last few weeks on Kim Philby. That enigma. I think nobody really has totally explained those Cambridge traitors, double agents. I think probably, in the future, potentially, more information hopefully that might come out to gain an understanding of why they betrayed their countries. And Graham Greene kept up his friendship with Philby and he based his Third Man, The Third Man, on Philby. The central character, Harry Lime, the scene opens with his burial. And it's just full of twists and turns, and very... He's captured the atmosphere of Vienna. Of course, Graham Greene himself, well, hugely successful writer, but actually, he undertook intelligence work. He's in the official MI6 history. He undertook intelligence work just after the Second World War in Vienna. And Vienna was still very important at that time, tracking down Russian scientists, technology, tracking spies moving in and out of the regions. Still, with the four occupying forces at the end of the Second World War, you have Britain, France, America, and the Russians

dividing post-war Germany and Austria into four zones. And that's very much being captured, that world that Graham Greene knew firsthand. And so, I think we can safely say that much of what the earliest spy writers draw on is, in many ways, their own experience. So I grew up, very naively, thinking that they had actually got brilliant creative minds, but they have so embedded our imagination in that world, and it comes from their experience.

Next slide, please. Apart from having been in Vienna at the end of the Second World War, Graham Greene did travel widely as a journalist. I'd forgotten, actually, until I was preparing today's lecture that he'd been recruited by his sister into MI6. He was very closely working, at one point, with Kim Philby, who was Graham Green's supervisor, but also the two men were friends. And when Philby came to write his autobiography, "My Silent War," which I think, for all that went wrong and the treachery of Philby, I think it's really, really well written. I think it's a good book. That's my personal opinion. But Graham Greene has written the foreword and it's a very interesting forward. I do advise you to get hold of that. A very... "My Silent War" and with a foreword by his friend, Graham Greene. And interestingly, there is reference, at some point to Graham Greene going... And I referenced this last week. Graham Greene going to the Soviet Union and meeting Philby as a friend, and saying to him, "Look, it's enough. "Why don't you re-defect?" I don't know how happy Philby was in Russia. I think he did pine for Britain. He probably realised his mistakes, what he'd done, he was stuck in the Soviet Union. And Graham Green said to him, "We'll enable you to re-defect," but Philby refused. Philby did, of course, live out his life in the Soviet Union until his death. Next slide. So Graham Greene wrote to his wife, Vivian... This was his first wife. He had a partner. Vivian passed away in 1947. But he wrote a letter at one point, while he was serving, of Philby, and he said of Philby, "He was a character profoundly antagonistic "to ordinary domestic life, "and that, unfortunately, "the disease is also one's material." So in a way, reflecting how these spy writers, and whether it's Philby operating, whether it's Graham Green himself, kind of almost detesting parts of life, but that becomes their own material for their novels.

Next slide, please. So Greene had a very illustrious career as a writer. I'm not sure if you're aware, he was shortlisted for the Nobel Prize, he didn't receive it, for Literature. He had an award from Jerusalem at one point. Amongst his books, very famously, "Our Man in Havana," "The Quiet American," of course, as I've mentioned, "The Third Man." Next slide please. So his own espionage history actually provides a very good foundation not only for the locations and the plots, but also for the characters themselves. As I said, it is now pretty much accepted that Harry Lime is based on his friend, Kim Philby. And I say there, "Vienna," because that's what Graham Greene's experienced, but where else? What other of his novels are based on his career? So he died, eventually, in 1991, in Switzerland, where he had

retired, and those well-loved spy fiction that he's written live on. And I really hope they'll make another edition, another version, of The Third Man very soon. I really hope so. Let's hope that comes out across the TV channels because I think... Just love it. And if you've seen "The Ipcress File" recently, we're up for some more of that. Next slide, please. I'm going to come to Frederick Forsyth, who I absolutely love his works. I have had the privilege of actually interviewing him, and he's an incredibly modest man for all his talent, and speaks very openly about how he became a very successful spy writer and a hugely successful journalist. Next slide, please. He was actually born in 1938 in Ashford in Kent. And during the Second World War, towards the end of the Second World War, he became the youngest pilot in the RAF, and he talks about that in a number of interviews, of just the impact of serving in the forces and how proud he was to have done that. But he'd led quite a sheltered life in Kent and he wanted to see the world. So he thought to himself, how could he see the world? And his reply, the only job that might enable me to travel and keep more or less my own hours is the journalistic career. And so, he becomes a journalist, starting initially to work for a regional journal up north. And then, after three years, he finally makes it into Reuters. And what's extraordinary about his time with Reuters, next slide, please, is that he becomes the only Western journalist behind the Iron Curtain in 1961. This is a critical period in the Cold War, tensions are really high, and he's in a very, very valuable position as the only Western journalist behind the Iron Curtain. And he does talk a little bit, now and again, about some of the antics he gets up to with the Stasi, the German secret police. Of course, he's being followed. He's almost inadvertently entered that spy world and has very much experience of what it's like to be watched 24/7. And when he's out in his little car, there's a car following behind the headlights, there's a man behind when he's walking. Constant monitoring. Microphones, of course. Somebody recording from the basement of the flats where he's staying. And he says... He talks about just how mentally taxing that is. He understands... I think this is why he part... It makes him such a hugely loved and brilliant spy writer, is because he's inadvertently inhabited that world. He knows what it's like to be constantly under surveillance in that very sparse world behind the Iron Curtain, that, again, is so brilliantly portrayed in the film, "A Bridge of Spies." If you haven't seen that, with Tom Hanks, it really has captured that world behind the Iron Curtain. And to be behind the Iron Curtain, hugely, hugely valuable. We need intelligence from behind there.

Now, I'm not suggesting, although I think he has admitted to doing a little bit of work, occasionally passing stuff across, but he was an eyewitness to what's going on, and his reports, which he would bring out into the West... He was quite at liberty to cross from Checkpoint Charlie into the West. And sometimes, he would sneak in further around on the train back into the other side of the east, and bring back reports that, of course, would not have demonstrations of... Against

the regime. And he did, of course, come under suspicion. He had a very close shave. You can read about it in his memoirs. But he becomes a really important eyewitness at that time behind the Iron Curtain, but he also has a bit of fun with a Stasi, and he has fake orgies in his room. He was very good at different pronunciations, different accents. So he'd have Low German, his own German, he'd be talking away, and then High German, faking a woman being in his room. And of course, the Stasi, saying, "Well, he can't possibly have a woman in his room. "I've been watching his front door." And I just love that. But he said mentally, it's really difficult to survive, and most journalists could only survive one year. His predecessor, I think, survived just nine months because of that intense pressure of being under constant surveillance and actually knowing it. So that, I think, for me, next slide, please, gives us an insight perhaps into... It's the firsthand experience, isn't it? I've got a few images here to remind us of life behind the Iron Curtain. Next slide, please. Life that was not without its risks for Western journalists.

Next slide, please. I love this. "Frederick Forsyth. "Me? "A spy." Of course there had been, and has been, speculation over the years, next slide, please, as to whether he had conducted any intelligence work. And finally, in his autobiography, again, brilliant, really worth reading, "The Outsider," he does admit to having... Just for a very short period, having done something for MI6. Next slide, please. And he says in his memoirs, "We all make mistakes "but starting the Third World War would've been "a rather large one. "To this day, I still maintain "it was not entirely my fault. "But I'm getting ahead of myself." Next slide, please. All will become clear. And he's written during the course of his life, "I barely escaped the wrath "of an arms dealer in Hamburg, "being strafed by MiG during the Nigerian Civil War, "and landed during a bloody coup in Guinea-Bissau." I mean, for me, reading his memoirs, it was a huge eye opener. I mean quite, quite extraordinary. He seems to land in the most unusual of places at times of conflict with a number of very close shaves, as we say. Next slide, please. Yeah, the Stasi arrested him when he was behind the Iron Curtain in 1961. He managed to blab his way out of that one. "The Israelis regaled me." The IRA prompted his quick move from Ireland, he was in Ireland for a short time, so that prompted a quick move back to England. And a certain attractive Czech secret police agent, "Well," he says, "her actions were "a bit more intimate, "and that's just for starters." You absolutely really do have to read his memoirs. Really brilliant, really colourful. And yeah, I won't spoil a bit about the attractive Czech secret police agent, how he handles her when he realises he knew that's... She was there as a honey trap.

Next slide, please. But interestingly, he says, "All of that I saw from the inside, "but all that time I was, nonetheless, an outsider." He wasn't a full-time intelligence officer for MI6. He had an insight, a peek into that world, but all the time, he was an outsider. Next slide, please. So he had a lot of experiences before he actually gets

to write his spy fiction. So he joins the BBC, ultimately, in 1965. And this becomes a really controversial period in his life because he's sent to Biafra to cover the Biafra War. There's a lot of famine, poverty. What he sees, the way children are being treated and the deaths of children, really, really affected him. And he wanted to cover that war. He was sent there to cover, from a very specific perspective, the war in Nigeria. But, as he writes in his book, the BBC said to him, "It's not our policy to cover this war." Leaves you wondering what he's doing there. But certainly, he was under strict instructions to be careful about what he's... What articles he's writing. He certainly was not there to capture the conditions of the children and the horrendous side of war. Next slide, please. But he has a conscience, and he said, "This was the period "when the Vietnam War was front page headlines "almost every day, "regarded broadly," he says, "as an American cockup. "And this particularly British cockup "in Nigeria was not going to be covered." He says, "I smelt news management. "I don't like news management. "So I made a private vow to myself "'you may gentlemen...'" Talking about the gentlemen who largely run the BBC. "You may, gentlemen, "not be covering it, "but I'm going to cover it." And so, that's what he did. He flew out there at great personal risk, he stayed there for almost two years covering the conflict.

Next slide, please. And what he says, "What I saw..." And people probably don't know this today. It's a conflict that we don't really hear about. He said, "What I saw of this brutal "and cynical conflict made it difficult "for me to toe the editorial line "of the BBC's coverage." So he resigned, turned freelance, and he says he vanished into the thick of the conflict, and later emerged to publish his highly controversial book, "The Biafra Story.' So this is not fiction, this... He hasn't fictionalised the Biafra War. This is actually nonfiction. Next slide, please. And my understanding, I guess, from what I've read of his life, is that it didn't necessarily make him any money. He's pretty much out of the journalist's world, he's desperately short of money. He goes to an editor and says, "I'm going to write a novel" and that's it. He sort of wakes up one day, he's got no money, he's sleeping... He talks about this in his memoirs. He's sleeping on the couch of a friend's house. He's literally sort of destitute and thinks, "I'm going to write a bestselling novel." Well, I think if most of us said that to our friends and family, they'd think, "Yeah, good luck." But unbelievably, his first novel sold over 10 million copies. And what has he done? He's used his experience at Reuters when he was a reporter in France in the early 1960s. So before we reveal which novel it was, I wonder if you can think in your head, do you know which was his first novel? Probably his most famous actually. Yeah, you know what his first novel was? Next slide, please. One back, please. Yes, "The Day of the Jackal." Absolutely brilliant. But, of course, most of his film... His books have been made into films. But this was... He wrote it in 35 days on a typewriter. Not in the days where we have computers and you can move paragraphs around,

and cut chapters in half, and put bit of the backend in the middle. He just shut himself away and wrote it in 35 days. Extraordinary. And sold over 10 million copies. Next slide, please. It is based on his own experiences as a journalist in France. And it was believed that there could, or would be, an assassination attempt on the French president, Charles De Gaulle, and Frederick Forsyth, in his memoirs, talks about how he was that journalist that was to follow De Gaulle everywhere, just waiting for a possible assassination attempt. And that becomes the basis of this utterly brilliant film, lead character, Edward Fox, made in 1973. Again, probably about time for another good one to come out, good version of that to come out. Next slide, please. He goes on to write a whole array of brilliant novels. "The Odessa File," come to that again shortly in a moment, "The Cobra." And "Day of the Jackal," we know. Everything based on his own personal research. And I guess, pretty much like me...

Next slide, please. Pretty much like myself, I prefer to do my own research. So he doesn't have a team of researchers. So often, he would meet quite tricky people in the underground world. If you are researching for his book, for example, "The Odessa File," he has to really try and get close to some of these. And I believe one of his novels is set in Afghanistan. And again, meeting people in the Far East, potentially very, very dangerous. And he sets himself a target of a maximum of 42 days to write a book. So the research is about a couple of years of really intense research. And it is, as historians find, really important to visit a location because you get a sense of place. You can also see tiny details that you wouldn't normally if you're just sat at your desk or you are Googling something, perhaps, it's a bit easier now if you've got Google, Google Maps, Google, whatever, Images, that kind of thing. But generally, there's nothing quite like a sense of place, and standing in a location, whether it's in the cemetery or a town that you are writing about and looking for the incidental detail. And that, I think, he... That's a high priority for him. So two years... I think he'd make a brilliant historian. So two years of absolutely meticulous research, and then just 42 days to write it. I'm not sure if anyone else in the novel world actually manages to write a book in just over a month. Quite extraordinary. Next slide, please. But "The Odessa File," again, you get... It's this theme that we're developing today of just how close to reality. And "The Odessa File," if you haven't read it or you haven't seen the film, is based on tracking down Nazi war criminals at the end of the Second World War. "Odessa" stands for German... It's an organisation. You notice a different spelling Port of Odessa. But it's really tracking down ex Nazis who have fled Germany. And the reporter who's the subject of the book discovers one of the SS officers via the diary of a Jewish Holocaust survivor who's just committed suicide. But that SS officer is being shielded by this secret organisation, ODESSA, that has helped Nazi war criminals to get out. And it is my understanding that it's... A lot of what he's written is based on accurate, historical fact... Factual. Historical accuracy. Those of you who may

be listening from Israel may have other stories. Here, in the UK, we have a different, potentially, perspective, different access to sources, but maybe in Israeli archives, there's more to verify, to deepen the story, of what's behind this organisation, and of course links into the work of the Wiesenthal Institute, and Simon Wiesenthal.

Next slide, please. So I think, for us today, I mean he's one of our best loved and most successful spy writers, isn't he? And thrillers, spy thrillers. So he's awarded a CBE in 1997, and it was in 2015 that he finally revealed... "FF," Frederick Forsyth. Finally revealed that, in Biafra, he'd actually worked for MI6, and he also said that he did a little bit of unpaid work, now and again, for MI6 for 20 years after that. So interestingly... Yeah, very, very interesting that what we originally loved about his novels before he could admit that it was just so close to his own experience. So I really do recommend that you read his books, if you haven't, and enjoy those. I think they're utterly brilliant and I love his autobiography.

Next slide, please. Ah, we're now going to talk about David Cornwell, the late David Cornwell, who passed away earlier this year in the... In Cornwell, actually. And his pen name, most famously, John le Carré. Again, one of our best loved spy writers. And at one point, he very casually wrote... Well, he had two homes between Cornwall and London, but he wrote, "I live on a Cornish cliff "and hate cities. "I write, and walk, "and swim, and drink." Next slide, please. So he's just a novelist, is he? Just a spy writer? But he comes to epitomise so accurately, I think even beyond the novels that Graham Green has done, he sort of carried it further. But his whole series with "Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy," his character, "Smiley." There's a very interesting comment, I haven't put in this today but I'm hoping I can remember it. It's just so insightful because if you read carefully what his lead character, Smiley, says at points, in Smiley's people, Smiley is about to retire, and he's at his spy school and he says to his recruits, "You know, you think the spy..." Words to this effect, "You think the Cold War is over, "but the challenge we have now is "the excesses of materialism." Those are Smiley's words. And I can't help thinking, "Actually, that's the thoughts of John le Carré himself." That the challenge is what he writes, he uses his novels, I think, with a message for each generation. Next slide, please. But he has so well captured that world with the spies in the shadows, with the trench coats and trilby hats, he's drawing on reality. Those of you who've read my new book, "Spymaster: The Man Who Saved MI6" about Thomas Kendrick, he lived in those shadows, wearing his trench coat and his trilby hat, and some of the scenes from his life, although it was just before the Cold War, could easily be written into one of le Carré's books.

Next slide, please. And he says, himself, and his own memoirs... He wrote his memoirs, "The Pigeon Tunnel." Again, really, really worth, worth reading. "Let me tell you a few things about myself," he says,

"not much, but enough. "In the old days, "it was convenient to bill me as "a spy turned writer." And he says, "I was nothing of the kind. "I'm a writer who, when I was very young, "spent a few ineffectual, "but extremely formative years "in British intelligence." Next slide, please. So what do we know about David Cornwell? Born... So he was older than Frederick Forsyth. Born in Poole in 1931, educated at Sherborne School, and he spent a year in Berne, in Switzerland, studying German literature. And it looks like that's the point at which, when he was skiing in Switzerland, he was recruited to MI6.

Next slide, please. And he's got a degree. He had a degree from Oxford. Next slide, please. And in his memoirs, Pigeon Tunnel, he talks about, "I act like a gent..." I met him a couple of times actually. I was so lucky to meet him. Didn't interview him, but I met him, and he was your quintessential English gentleman. I mean, a real gentleman. He was kind, he was thoughtful... Thoughtful as in thinking thoughts, well, as well as been kind and thoughtful. And he was that quintessential English gentleman. And "I'd act like a gent," he says, "but I'm wonderfully badly born. "My father was a confidence trickster "and a jailbird. "Read "A Perfect Spy."" So he channels... And again, particularly in his memoirs, in the Pigeon Tunnel, he talks about the impact of his upbringing. It did scar him. It was a very difficult time with his father in jail, his father being pretty rough towards his mother. And this shaped... These experiences shaped him, and he used them, actually, quite positively. But between the lines, you can read the difficulties and pain that that must have taken, and it took him a long time, it seems, to have worked through that enough to feel comfortable about expressing this in his books. Next slide, please. So he actually taught at Eton for a couple of years. And then, in 1958, not many people know this, actually, he worked for MI5 just for a year. He was based in Buckinghamshire, if I'm not mistaken. What was he doing? So MI5, being security service for security and counterespionage in this country, running agents, contact with Russian agent, he talks about that in one of his books, conducting debriefings, interrogations, listening in, the tapping of the phone lines, we're used to that, and break-ins.

Next slide, please. So after a year with MI5, he transfers to MI6, and he worked, from 1959 to 1964, in the British Embassy in Bonn. There's not much going on in Bonn at that time. And that's the time at which he begins to write one of his novels that he never expected to be... Well, like with Frederick Forsyth... Well, Frederick Forsyth did or expect his first novel, or wanted it, to be a bestselling novel. But my understanding from reading what Cornwell's written about his own life is that he never expected his novels necessarily to be blockbusters. So he serves in the Embassy undercover as the Second Secretary, so he's a member of the British Foreign Service. He then transfers, and he's in Hamburg for a short time as political consul, and he actually starts writing his novels in 1961. He's now published more than 24 titles. It's probably 25, 26. Sorry, 26, 27, yeah, if you

include his memoirs. Next slide, please. So he's written a number of very, very well known books, as we know. Most of them around his character, Smiley. I love these covers. "The Spy Who Came in From the Cold." Again, a lot of his own personal experiences woven into. Next slide, please. It's that he accurately manages to portray, from experience, that Cold War tension. Not just spy world, but the tension between Russia and the West.

Next slide, please. As I mentioned earlier, he was recruited by MI6 in Switzerland, by a particular ski instructor. And that... Next slide, please. And it's understood that ski instructor was an MI6 guy, Dick Edmonds, who was in Switzerland at the time, but le Carré lived with the Edmonds family for a short time Micklefield Hall in Sarratt. For those of you who are not aware, Sarratt is in Buckinghamshire. It's about 18, 20 miles from London. Tiny Village. It becomes the location... He's staying there with the family for a short time. It becomes the location for his spy school. Now, a lot of the locals in Buckinghamshire... Next slide, please. A lot of the locals in Buckinghamshire and around that area aren't sure that there really is anywhere that could be a spy school. So what do they think is the spy school that le Carré has based his novels on? Tinker Tailor, Smiley's People. Next slide, please. The local people that I meet when I give my talks think it was Latimer House. I did a once ask him, "Is your spy school really Latimer House?" And he said, "No, it is based in Sarratt." But of course, that, in many ways, adds to the sort of mystery. We certainly know that this house, Latimer House, it's about two to three miles from Sarratt, was, in the Second World War, one of the most important intelligence stations run by, I say "my man, Kendrick," but the MI6 guy, Kendrick. It's a fascinating history around there. And just a mile up the road is a tiny village again, in this almost like a triangle. You've got Sarratt there, Latimer House in Latimer, and you have Flaunden. The Green Dragon in Flaunden, the last... It's now been officially released in declassified files. The last public sighting of Guy Burgess before he defected because one of his more long-term partners lived in the farm just a couple of hundred metres down from The Green Dragon. And that was his last public sighting before he defected, having a drink in that pub. Next slide, please. So at one point, he wrote, "It's 40 years since I hung up "my cloak and dagger. "I wrote my first three books "while I was a spook. "I wrote the next 18 after..." I love that. "After I was at large." Of course, it's more than that now. As I say, it's more like 26. I haven't counted but with his memoirs...

Next slide, please. But why did he give up espionage to become a spy writer? He was betrayed. That's why he gave up espionage in 1964. You just wonder, we talked previously about the spies who changed the course of history. One particular double agent changed the course of David Cornwell's career, le Carré's career. Who was he betrayed by? You could probably guess, actually. Next slide, please. Yeah, by Kim Philby. So that, he says, he had to give up his life with MI6, working

for MI6. And you think, "I wonder what le Carré would've gone on to do? "What intelligence operations "he would've successfully contributed to "if he had not been betrayed by Philby "and therefore took up his career, "his very successful career, as a novelist?"

Next slide, please. But he also writes about a period where he visits Moscow, 1987. I'll leave you to read that in Pigeon Tunnel. I think that's probably the best thing, I don't want to have any spoiler alerts here. But he does manage to travel to Moscow just two years before the Berlin Wall comes down. And he does speak to the union of Soviet writers. He is approached by Borovik, we mentioned Borovik the other day. He's written books on espionage with our spy writer... Fiction. He's written, sorry, non-fiction books with Nigel West. And he was approached by Borovik at that dinner and said, would he meet an old friend and someone who admires him? And the message comes, that admirer was Philby. Philby was dying. Did he go? We don't know. I don't think he did. I think he was so disgusted by what Philby did. I think, finally... That's right, in the Pigeon Tunnel, he finally admits that he didn't actually go to meet his old dying friend. Why would you if you'd been betrayed? Next slide, please. He spent most of his time writing, living in St. Buryan in Cornwall. Not far from Land's End. I haven't checked actually. I'm not sure whether that's where he's buried. Almost certainly where he owned a mile of coast land near Land's End. And that's where he sat and wrote most of the rest of his novels. Next slide, please. But just very briefly, there's another very interesting writer who was part of this world. Certainly, his father, Colonel Tangye, was a very close comrade of my man, Kendrick. They served for a time in post-war Germany after the first World War, in intelligence duties. Derek Tangye spent time growing up in Vienna after that, and was very close to the Kendrick family. Tangye became an author and journalist who actually worked, at one point, in MI5 during the second World War. He lived very near, in St. Bunyan, with le Carré. And at Tangye's funeral in 1996, it was his friend, le Carré, who gave the eulogy. But these men using their experiences, it's very much an interconnected world. But Tangye is one who's largely been forgotten but, again, worth rediscovering. Next slide, please. If you want to follow up more on John le Carré's life, Adam Sisman's book, his biography, is absolutely brilliant, written with official cooperation, is my understanding, with le Carré. I think he's the first and only biography of le Carré. le Carré was quite shy about having a biography written, but this is really, really brilliant. Again, one that you might want to get from the library or have on your bookshelf.

Next slide, please. But just as sort of teaser, I suppose, that fine line between fact and fiction, I think I might... I'm almost convincing myself that it's worth looking into this, that fine line. He says, "Nothing that I write is authentic. It is the stuff of dreams, not reality. Yet I am treated by the media "as though I wrote the espionage handbooks." Well, I don't think... I'm not sure that

he's quite... Again, that's almost a comment from the shadows, isn't it?

I'm going to tell you my most favourite story in the Pigeon Tunnel, and it kind of crosses over a little bit with the research I've done myself. And at the very, very end of Pigeon Tunnel... And this is no spoiler, I think it's okay to talk about this. At the very end of Pigeon Tunnel, he talks about the time... He was there when MI6 moved its headquarters from Broadway Building, which is near St. James's underground station, it moved there... From there, to its new iconic building on the banks of the Thames, the one that appears in the more recent James Bond films. I think it's a fabulous design, but it's moved from Broadway buildings. And when they were moving out, buildings empty, there is this safe. I mean enormous, absolutely enormous, safe, that's kind of like bolted to the floor, and nobody's got the key. Who's got the key? So he asked the head of MI6, "No, no, he hasn't got the key." "What about the last head of MI6?" "We contact them in retirement, "the last head of MI6, "he hasn't got the key." "And the last head of MI6?" "He hasn't got the key, "and of course the rest have passed away." No one has the key to this safe 'cause they're trying to decide, number one, what's in it, and whether it should be moved to the new MI6 headquarters. I just absolutely love this story. So what do they do? They get one of their guys to break in. They crack open the safe. What is inside the safe? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Well, okay, there's nothing inside the safe. Are we going to take the safe to the new headquarters? And they decide, "Yes. "We are going to take the safe to the new headquarters." And when they pulled the safe away from the wall, it's bizarre, what was behind? I think there's only two or three intelligence officers at the time when this happens, and he was a witness to this himself. What was behind that safe? Rudolph Hess's trousers. And you think, "This is bizarre." With a tiny label... It's totally bizarre. With a tiny label on it saying, "Please, could you have these analysed?"

And it reminds me of a memoir, a musing, that was written by Charles Fraser-Smith, who worked for MI6, and he was the gadget man. We're way back where we started to Fleming and the Q gadgets. Charles Fraser-Smith was one of those men in the wartime, the Second World War, who sourced gadgets and sometimes invented the odd one, along with Christopher Clayton Hutton. And in his... One of his books, Fraser-Smith actually talks about the time he had a phone call. This is May 1941. He receives a phone call saying, "Please, can you come over to the Tower of London? "We've got a very urgent job for you." "What is it?" "We want you to copy Hess's uniform." And as he, himself, comments, whether... So they were analysing the type of cloth and he was supposed to make a duplicate of Hess's uniform. Now, whether it was ever used is highly unlikely. He never found out. We know what happens to Hess. Been lots of books written about what happens to Hess, but how strange that the interconnectedness of those stories. But somewhere, I guess, if there's a museum, I don't know if there is

a private museum in MI6 headquarters, somewhere in a display cabinet, perhaps it is on display or perhaps it's put back behind that safe in MI6 headquarters, but how extraordinary is that? I mean, if you wrote that scene into a novel, it would just seem bizarre. It would be unbelievable. And I think that's what continues to fuel our fascination, our love, with this whole spy history, the whole espionage novel genre, because we are trying to work out that world and it remains elusive.

In many ways, and this is just me personally, as a historian, I kind of hope that everything isn't declassified, and I don't want to get a lot of flack for saying that. But I think because, in a way, if you take away that mystery and that kind of magic, I think an awful lot is lost. I think it's okay to tell the stories that we're allowed to tell, and still to be inspired by that fine line, trying to work out fact from fiction. And if you are interested in contemporary... I bet there's a lot of contemporary writers. But I would recommend, highly recommend, Charlotte Philby's new book, "Edith and Kim," which she has spent so long of her young life trying to grapple with the fact that they had a traitor.. Her grandfather was a traitor and double agent, that you have that in your family. She has been wrestling with that and it's now been fictionalised. She's fictionalised part of her grandfather's life in Vienna in the 1930s, where he's taken up as a penetration agent. So do have a look at that. There's so much to read and enjoy, still, in this genre.

Next slide, please. And so, I think I want to finish really with the words of penned... Under his pen name, John le Carré. I love this: "A desk is a dangerous place from which to view the world." So who knows? He often sat in the corner of various cafes, just contemplating and watching the world. Maybe one of us has actually made it into one of his characters in one of those novels. So yeah, "a desk is a dangerous place "from which to view the world." And I'll leave you with that thought from the wonderful, late, John le Carré. Thank you.