

## PETER EARLEY ON “INSIDE THE MIND OF A TRAITOR”

*By: David Smith*

A best-selling author and journalist shared three con-temporary stories of U.S.-Russian espionage and betrayal at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University.

Former Washington Post reporter Peter Earley was the first of five speakers in the 2008-2009 Honors Program Distinguished Speaker Series. Dr. Geoffrey Kain, the Honors coordinator, introduced Earley who was “absolutely thrilled to be here.”

Earley’s talk, *Inside the Mind of a Traitor*, centered on the events and mental states of a high-ranked Russian spy who defected to the U.S., and two tales of Americans who sold intelligence to Russia. Earley met with all three and wrote a book about each.

“One man’s Benedict Arnold is another’s Nathan Hale,” Earley said.



Sergei Tretyakov, formerly of the KGB, defected to the U.S. in 2000 after years of training and grooming. Before his change of heart, he headed its largest U.S. operation in New York City.

According to the FBI, “[Tretyakov] held the keys to Russian intelligence,” Earley said. He was paid \$2 million for his assistance.

During his visits to Russia at the end of Cold War, as a member of the KGB, Tretyakov observed Moscow in disrepair and was unhappy with the behavior of President Boris Yeltsin and then-KGB official Vladimir Putin.

The reason he “called the FBI” was because he wanted his teenage daughter to enjoy a better life outside of post-Soviet-Union Russia.

“Since the end of World War II, the Russians have not successfully recruited one American, while over 200 have turned,” Earley said.

While Tretyakov may have been motivated by the political decay in Russia, monetary ambitions catalyzed the betrayals of Americans John Walker and Aldrich Ames.

Walker did something amazing, the New York Times best-seller said.

In December of 1967, he walked into the Soviet Embassy in New York, said he wanted to collaborate, and demanded a weekly salary of \$1000/week.

This act flies in the face of the attitudinal loyalty most Americans possess, Earley described the term as undying loyalty to the U.S. due to belief in its global importance.

Walker “compromised every cryptic system used by the U.S. military,” while employed in the U.S. Navy. He “gave the Soviets a front-row seat into our operations for 18 years,” which helped the Russians understand the mentality of U.S. officials.

“This pattern was part of the delinquent nature of a man who joined the Navy after being offered a choice by a Pennsylvania judge as a young man,” Earley said.

But Walker’s sustained successes depended upon people’s trust in him - associated with attitudinal loyalty; his mantra of “KISS (Keep it Simple Stupid)” – he smuggled documents inconspicuously; lax Navy security – Walker falsified a back-ground check to acquire security clearance; and his own ability to manipulate and recruit willing sidekicks.

When Walker was caught in 1985, it was only two weeks before the Russians (who considered Walker’s intelligence invaluable) had a new asset.

Earley described Aldrich Ames as a man who “never seemed to know who he was.” Ames participated in theatre extensively during youth and his father landed him a job with the Central Intelligence Agency after he flunked out of college.

After an unsuccessful marriage with a colleague, Ames met a Colombian woman with whom he fell in love, and wanted to marry. But he first needed \$50,000 for a divorce.

That’s where the Russians came in.

Earley said Ames turned over the identity of every CIA asset in Moscow. The KGB subsequently arrested or executed each of them. Earley, who visited Ames in prison for 17 days, was told by Ames that he gave them all up to save himself.

In addition to love for his new wife, Ames turned against U.S. to provide for their indulgent habits. Earley said that in discussions with Ames’ former colleagues, they noticed a shift towards material lust during his second marriage.

Ames’ days were numbered in 1994 after his excessive lifestyle, adapted from his second wife, revealed the betrayal.

Of the Americans, the former Washington Post reporter said treason was precipitated by a personal crisis. Both men were upset at superiors for a lack of promotion they felt entitled to.

And they “lived in a world of complete moral weightlessness,” Earley said.

While money was the key for Ames and Walker, “Sergei became disillusioned with his own government,” Earley said. He added that Tretyakov lives in Florida, but neither Ames nor Walker ever wanted to go to Russia.

In response to a question about the current nature of intelligence-gathering, Earley said, “the KGB still has the U.S. as its number one target.”