



Betrayal:: The Story of Aldrich Ames, an American Spy

By Tim Weiner

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The inside story of the biggest molehunt in the history of American intelligence: the search for and discovery by three New York Times journalists of Aldrich Ames, who was paid by the Soviets for years to spy in America. 16 pages of photos. Index.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Aldrich Ames, according to this account by a team of *New York Times* reporters, was an incompetent, office-bound, alcoholic spy in the middle of an undistinguished career. Even so, he was promoted to lead the counterintelligence branch of the CIA's central Soviet division, and there, in 1983, he began calling for the files on every important CIA operation involving Soviet spies in every corner of the world. He sold these files to the Soviets in order to fund tastes not appropriate to his salary; dozens of U.S. operatives were exposed, and many were killed.

Until his arrest and conviction for espionage in 1994, Ames received nearly \$3 million for his treason, about which he was quite unsubtle. Yet the CIA took years to wonder why Ames could afford an expensive home in a Washington, D.C., suburb and frequent weekend trips to Europe. The agency was so slow to act, the authors suggest, because its leadership was more concerned with institutional self-preservation than with doing its job properly. This suspenseful book draws on interviews with Ames himself to show that major housecleaning is in order at Langley.

From Publishers Weekly

This New York Times reporting team's taut, riveting, remarkably vivid account of former CIA agent Aldrich Ames's treason, arrest and 1994 conviction as a mole for Moscow reads like a spy thriller. The Wisconsin-born son of a history professor-turned-CIA-agent, Ames, depicted here as a slovenly, procrastinating, inept, mediocre, alcoholic bureaucrat, rose to become counterintelligence chief of the CIA's Soviet division. In 1985, he revealed to the KGB the identities of 12 Soviet intelligence officers who were secretly working for the CIA. Despite the ensuing wave of KGB arrests and executions, the CIA would not acknowledge that someone within its ranks was a traitor, and the agency's slapdash mole-hunt made progress only after 1991, when the FBI was called in to crack the case. Through hours of jailhouse interviews with Ames, sentenced to life without parole, the authors establish greed as his overriding motive—he stashed away \$2 million in payoffs from Moscow in secret bank accounts. This is an amazing tale of institutional hubris and bungling. Photos.

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From [Booklist](#)

James Adams [*Sellout*, BKL Ap 15 95] won the race for the first book-length account of the Ames case, but this author complements his predecessor. Both open with the traitor's arrest, yet they quote Ames' statements differently: "Think, think, think," he mumbled, according to Adams; "You must have the wrong man," quotes Weiner. In either case, Ames was obviously surprised at the crash of his fortunes, having burned agents, blown operations, and collected bundles of Russian cash with impunity for nearly 10 years. Weiner and his *New York Times* team do well narrating such cravenness, which originated in a web of resentments: Ames felt stalled in his career, smarter than the anti-Soviet zealots at Casey's CIA, and strapped for cash. When the case broke last year, the hue and cry played up an incompetent CIA that didn't note the warning signs of Ames' drunkenness and professional sluggishness--legitimate charges--but a well-rounded picture would include the KGB's deceptions that concealed its mole's identity. That roundedness Weiner's team delivers through this window on intelligence issues. *Gilbert Taylor*

Users Review

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