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The Spy I Married

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# STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

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## INTELLIGENCE IN RECENT PUBLIC LITERATURE

### Classic Soviet Nets

- MY SILENT WAR. By *Harold Adrian Russell Philby*. (New York: Grove Press. 1968. 262 pp. \$5.95.)
- THE PHILBY CONSPIRACY. By *Bruce Page, David Leitch, and Phillip Knightley*. (New York: Doubleday. 1968. 300 pp. \$5.95.)
- THE THIRD MAN. By *E. H. Cookridge* (pseudonym for Edward Spiro). (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons. 1968. 281 pp. \$5.95.)
- KIM PHILBY: The Spy I Married. By *Eleanor Philby*. (New York: Ballantine Books. Paperback. 1968. 174 pp. \$.75.)

Each of these four books reflects a special attitude toward the most spectacularly successful spy of our generation, Harold Adrian Russell Philby, better known as "Kim." His success is in fact frightening to contemplate; if it had not been for his loyalty to two highly unstable and risky comrades, Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean, and an unanticipated Soviet defection, he might well have been appointed head of the British intelligence service and would have then perhaps been able to protect his identity as Russia's greatest espionage agent for the rest of his life. Though the present books reveal much about Philby, his British environment, the historical climate within which he lived and evolved, and MI-6 and MI-5, there is still much left to be revealed in the future.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Philby's book has already generated retrospective contributions by three of his former colleagues in the service. These, along with earlier articles by the same authors, are of more than ephemeral interest because they contain factual detail and appreciation which are primary contributions to an understanding of Philby the operator. It is probably no coincidence that each of the writers is himself discussed by Philby at various points in his memoir. The articles appeared as indicated below.

Graham Greene: ". . . Security in Room 51," *The Sunday Times*, 14 July 1963; "Our Man in Moscow," *The Observer* (London), 18 February 1968, p. 26; "Reflections on the Character of Kim Philby," *Esquire*, September 1968, p. 111.

Malcolm Muggeridge: "The Case of Kim Philby," *Sunday Telegraph*, 7 July 1963; "Refractions in the Character of Kim Philby," *Esquire*, September 1968, pp. 113, 165-170.

Hugh Trevor-Roper: "Espionage, Treason, and Secret Services," *Encounter*, April 1968, pp. 3-26, followed by *The Philby Affair* (London, 1968).

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In the preface to *My Silent War*, Philby actually declares that his book is merely prologue to what will follow at a later date. His present reticence about his close relationship with U.S. intelligence and his activities since 1955 suggest that these will be the subjects of a sequel to appear when the KGB deems it propitious. In an epilogue he explains the delay:

The compelling reason is that while the British and American intelligence services can reconstruct pretty accurately my activities up to 1955, there is positive and negative evidence that they know nothing about my subsequent career in the Soviet Service.

This confidence may be justified to some degree, but on the threshold of the later period, when he served as correspondent for *The Economist* and *The Observer*, he moved all over the Middle East meeting every leading statesmen and politician in the Arab world and reporting on the concatenation of events which were to explode in the Sinai Campaign of 1956. It was logical for the Soviets to instruct him to seek an assignment in the Middle East: he was the son of that great Arabist, St. John Philby, and he had recently humiliated perfidious Albion, qualifications that would give him an enviable entrée to a volatile area high on their target list. A close reading of his dispatches shows that he made a serious effort to reflect the standards of an objective "Western" reporter, but through them all runs a subtle condemnation of imperialism and the American presence, always expressed in the pronouncements of anti-imperialist Arabs. There is never any criticism of the Soviet machinations which were beginning to manifest themselves at the time. Knowing the British and American attitudes as well as the Arab mind, Philby may very well have become one of the guiding lights of KGB, if not Soviet, policy in the Middle East.

Why would a man of his background and connections sell his soul to the devil without ever a tinge of Faustian remorse? One of his first acts in going up to Cambridge in 1929 was to join the Socialist Society, and he admits that when he left the university he was a Communist. Not long thereafter came his recruitment. His own explanation is:

It is a sobering thought that, but for the power of the Soviet Union and the Communist idea, the Old World, if not the whole world, would now be ruled by Hitler and Hirohito.

But that is after-the-fact rationalization, not motivation in the early thirties.

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John le Carré, the disillusioned British author of *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, has written a stimulating introduction to the Page-Leitch-Knightley book. Himself apparently beset with a constant antipathy for the British Establishment, Le Carré makes a big case for Philby's hatred of the Establishment, derived from his father, as motivation for his treason:

Duplicity for Kim Philby was something of a family tradition. However Philby reacted to his eminently distasteful father, whether he wished to destroy or outshine him, or merely to follow in his footsteps, he could hardly fail, in the outposts where they lived, to inherit many of his characteristics. St. John Philby did not hide from his son his contempt for his superiors in London.

Le Carré believes that Kim acquired from his father the "neo-fascist" instincts of a slightly beserk English gentleman.

The three authors' *Philby Conspiracy* is certainly the most ambitious and comprehensive of these books and reads better than most good spy stories. Despite their peripatetic efforts, however, and their serious labors to uncover the clandestine lives of their three unholy subjects, the fact that they did not have access to official classified information leaves their work still incomplete and full of gaps. There are also inaccuracies. Philby's downfall was not precipitated by a Polish defector. It is questionable that he remained a "field agent" of MI-6 after his dismissal in 1951. Since the authors were youngsters during the war and not intelligence professionals, they could not be expected to appreciate Philby's work against the Germans from 1941 to 1945, but they might have mentioned it. With the confluence of British and Russian interests against the Germans, it is presumed that he contributed as much to MI-6 as he did to the NKVD. But his role in Operation North Pole and his connection with the Communist resistance in France and the Rote Kapelle are ignored.

Did Philby, for instance, assist the NKVD in the assassination of General Sikorsky at Gibraltar? Sabotage of the general's plane has been laid to both the Russians and the British, and Philby was in charge of MI-6 counterintelligence operations for the Iberian Peninsula at the time. The Cookridge book says that he was in touch with certain Soviet agents possibly implicated in the case, but we do not know as yet his connection with them, and we cannot suppose that Cookridge knows more than we do. Yet it is not farfetched to surmise that Philby's Soviet case officer may have got from him informa-

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tion essential to the success of the operation; it was the kind of operation that needed inside assistance.

E. H. Cookridge acquired a reputation of "former secret agent" and "international authority on espionage" from his earlier *Secrets of the British Secret Service* and *The Soviet Spy Net*, written without benefit of connection with either British or Soviet intelligence. Like the present *Third Man*, they were based on voluminous press clippings from British, American and continental newspapers and supplemented by official documents accessible to public scrutiny. All these books are a curious mixture of fact and wild inaccuracies, made to sound professional by use of the right jargon.

Cookridge knew Philby in Vienna in 1933-1934 and subsequently, a fact that entitles him to speak with some authority. He says Philby was a Communist in Vienna, as Philby himself does. But the book contains many disconcerting discrepancies and outright guesses. It describes Philby's elegant and luxurious living in Washington, something denied by everybody who knew him. It calls his second wife American; she was British. Perhaps this error is forgivable inasmuch as Philby has had four wives—an Austrian Communist who became British, a Britisher, and two Americans. But there are many other mistaken names, dates, places, and facts. The book is definitely less authoritative than it reads, but it should be read as a complement to the other two.

Third wife Eleanor Philby's *Kim Philby: The Spy I Married*, says very little about spying and too much about her husband's drinking orgies. One gets the impression that they had little time for anything else, though she claims that these were the happiest years of her life. He obviously was cracking under the strain of thirty years of deception—even of his wife when he most professed to love her. After he went "home" to Moscow, he lightly discarded her for Melinda Maclean, who must be something of a kook too. Her easy desertion of Maclean, after having followed him to Moscow and lived with him until Philby's arrival, suggests that he was even more maladjusted in Moscow than he had been in the West. It does seem incredible that Eleanor never learned or suspected anything about Philby's true character and that she could have been so unfeminine as to be personally incurious about his political attitudes and nocturnal activities. But if he could fool the British intelligence service for eleven years, I suppose he could deceive a wife for five. Her book is valuable to the professional

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analyst for its psychological insights. Philby's own book avoids the sensitive areas of personality treated by her and Cookridge.

Why did Philby write his book? To counteract the nonsense and defamation being published in London, he says. But as he must have known or at least learned after his arrival in Moscow, nobody, not even a Hero of the Soviet Union, publishes anything touching on Soviet state secrets or activities without the *nihil obstat* of the KGB or under its specific instructions. The book must therefore be looked upon as a tactic of the continuing cold war—an instrument of blackmail, deception, and disinformation. If his memoirs had no political purpose, why did he first offer to withdraw publication of a not yet seen but assuredly embarrassing manuscript in exchange for a political concession by the British government—the release from prison of the Krogers (Cohens), the veteran Soviet agents picked up with Lonsdale?

There is a long-term goal in this new Soviet policy of publicizing intelligence successes. It is an advanced stage of psychological warfare intended both to embarrass the West and to undermine the morale of the intelligence services and the public in Britain and the United States. Philby did an exceedingly smooth job of denigrating MI-6 and MI-5, past and present. The other half of the same program is the KGB's defamation of the CIA by all devices, including disinformation. Philby accuses CIA, for example, of having murdered Stepan Bandera in Munich, ignoring the fact that a Russian defector, Bogdan Stashinsky, confessed to having done this murder on KGB instruction.

The Philby case is a real mystery thriller and will remain mysterious until some informed defector or defectors reveal unknown facts and clarify disputed points. It could be and should be a subject of long study for all young men who have embarked on intelligence careers. It offers many lessons from several specialized points of view—counter-intelligence, recruiting, psychological and moral assessment, operational control, security of operations, and security of the service. Above all it brings home the patient, long-term approach of the Soviet services, which their adversaries should never forget.

Philby, like other contemporaries of his, was disenchanted with the Establishment. Thirty years later our society is experiencing another period of distaste for the establishment on the part of the youth. Rest assured that the Soviets, far more sophisticated than they were in 1930, are already at work in this murky milieu, not for today but for the 1980's and 1990's. The lines and personalities of the Philby case, inextricably interwoven with the Rote Kapelle, the Rote Drei and

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Operation North Pole, will continue to surface again and again, perhaps even close to home, for the United States and the CIA are major targets of the KGB and will be for many years to come.

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