

DEC 19 1967

EXCLUSIVE SUPERSPY INTERVIEW

Philby Bid: Spy Swap To Kill Book

THE BACKGROUND

Soviet double agent Harold (Kim) Philby, whose infiltration of British and American intelligence operations marked him as the Kremlin's most successful spy in the postwar era, is reportedly attempting to publish his memoirs in the West.

In lengthy interviews with London Sunday Times reporter Murray Sayle, Philby, who fled to the Soviet Union in 1963, suggested that he might withdraw his memoirs (presumably damaging to Western intelligence) if Soviet spies Peter and Helen Kroger were exchanged for Gerald Brooke.

The Krogers were sentenced in Britain in March, 1961, to 20 years for espionage. Brooke was sentenced in July, 1965, to a year's imprisonment and four years in a labor camp. Suggestions of an exchange have been steadfastly refused by the British government.

By Murray Sayle

London Sunday Times Special

MOSCOW—My first direct contact with Harold Philby was a telephone call to my room at the Leningradskaya Hotel in Moscow. We arranged to meet in Room 436 at the Minsk Hotel on Gorky Boulevard (the "Broadway of Moscow"), at 8 the same night.

I knocked, the door opened, and there was Philby, smiling with hand outstretched. The room was bare except for two chairs and a table on which stood a briefcase, a bottle of vodka and two glasses. The tables stood by a window with a breathtaking view over Moscow, red stars shining on the ghostly white walls and spires of the Kremlin in the distance.

"This is a tough, dynamic city," said Philby. "This society is going somewhere. Care for a drink?"

I accepted his offer. Philby is a courteous man, smiles a great deal, and his well-cut gray hair and ruddy complexion suggest vitality and enjoyment of life.

He speaks exactly as a senior British civil servant would about his present employers—"My superiors" he says, "my

colleagues," and very early in our conversation he explained, "I am a serving officer of the KGB (the Soviet secret police), as you probably know."

He said he would assume that it was possible that I worked for some Western intelligence service.

"I naturally took precautions against any rough stuff—you would not have got 10 yards down the street," he said.

We met subsequently at a number of restaurants. During these long Russian meals vodka, wine and brandy flowed freely, and Philby talked lengthily, even compulsively.

He is clearly a sociable type of drinker and he seems to have an iron head; I could detect no change in his alertness or joviality as the waiters arrived with relays or 300 grams of vodka or 600 grams of Armenian brandy.

The conversations which follow took place in no particular order, and I present them without further comment.

GERALD BROKE AND THE KROGERS: Philby raised this subject himself, spontaneously.

"There was an interesting suggestion in the Economist,"

he said. "The idea was that I would be prepared to withdraw my manuscript if the Krogers were exchanged for Brooke. If that were in fact a condition of the Krogers being released, of course I would withdraw my book."

I asked, "Is that a message for someone? Do you want that passed on?"

Philby replied; "No, it was just an idea I had." I asked; "Why are you so anxious to make this exchange with the Krogers?"

"Our position is that the Krogers are innocent of the charges on which they were convicted," Philby said. "They were personal, not political friends of Gordon Lonsdale. We don't dispute that people like Gordon and Col. Abel were our agents, highly skilled professionals, but we cannot agree that the Krogers were the top-level agents they are being represented as, or indeed our agents at all except in the sense of being friends of Lonsdale.

"Now, look at the other side. It's a pity about Brooke, he really was a silly fellow. He got involved with the NTs (the "People's Labor Front," a venerable Russian refugee organization) and they gave him a list of people to contact who were supposed to be working inside the Soviet Union. We have penetrated what is left of the NTs so thoroughly that the very first person he contacted was a KGB man. All this came out at Brooke's trial and is well known in the West."

I said: "There seems to be a feeling in the West that Brooke was more or less innocently handing out anti-Communist literature and was grabbed by your people in order to exchange him off for the Krogers."

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