

Re: Robert F. Kennedy, William Henry  
 Philby, Harold (Kim)  
 sec. 4.01.2 My Silent War  
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Front Page  
 Ed Page  
 Other Page

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## The Bookshelf

### Gentleman Spy

The British foreign service in the post-World War II period proved distressingly porous as far as ideological infiltration by Soviet agents was concerned. Soviet secret agents kept popping up in the most unexpected places, and with the most impeccable, gentlemanly backgrounds. Three who finally went "home" to Moscow, after playing havoc with the supposedly secret operations of Britain and America, were Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess and Kim Philby.

The first two have abided by the spy's convention of saying nothing (unless he passes over to the other side). But Philby has composed, in "My Silent War," a heavily selective and self-censored story of his more than 30 years as a Soviet secret agent. Since his home address is now Moscow, he is mute about the details of his recruitment by and contacts with Soviet secret agencies, apart from the starting date of 1933, when he left Cambridge University.

His subsequent career included so many false fronts, disguises and assumed roles that it sometimes seems strange he could have kept them all clear in his own mind. One of his first assignments was to work with pro-Nazi organizations in England before the outbreak of the war. Later he went to Spain as correspondent for the Times, of London, with Franco's forces and was awarded the Red Cross of Military Merit by Franco personally in 1938. He was recruited by the British Secret Intelligence Service, where he worked in close collaboration with his fellow-communist sympathizer, Burgess. Philby must have nearly set a world record for receiving inappropriate appointments and endorsements.

In 1945 the British SIS placed Philby in charge of a new section charged with anti-Communist and anti-Soviet intelligence. Later the service sent him on a mission to Turkey, where he had an excellent opportunity to study Turkish defenses under the guise of surveying the Soviet border.

Philby went from success to success. In 1949 he became the British agency's representative in Washington with the job of working in liaison with the FBI and the CIA. This made him privy to U.S. as well as British "top secret" operations, including the dropping of agents by parachute into the Soviet Ukraine and infiltration of agents into Albania. Philby shows an attitude of impish glee about his successful penetration of what were considered the very inner bastions of Anglo-American security.

The reader might be tempted to share his amusement, until he reflects that Philby must have sent scores, if not hundreds, of men to their deaths by communicating these plans to his Soviet superiors. Then one's mood changes to contempt for Philby as a human being and disgust at the bumbling stupidity that allowed him to continue his chosen role of traitorous espionage agent so long, and finally to get off unpunished.

Harold Macmillan, as foreign minister, solemnly declared in Parliament in 1955 that there was no evidence that Philby had betrayed the interests of Great Britain. Meantime, Burgess in America was able to warn his fellow-conspirator, Maclean, in England that suspicion was beginning to gather around him. In order to get a pretext for a quick recall to London, Burgess got himself arrested three times for speeding on Virginia roads. The governor protested this abuse of diplomatic immunity and Burgess got the recall.

Although the finger of suspicion had been pointed at Philby in several quarters in England, he went to Beirut, Lebanon, in 1956 on one of his familiar multiple assignments. Outwardly he was correspondent for two very reputable publications, the Observer and the Economist. Covertly he was in the employ of the British intelligence service. Still more secretly, he remained a highly prized operative of the farflung Soviet espionage system. In 1963, his sins almost caught up with him.

He sought political asylum in the Soviet Union. And there, in 1965 he received the only decoration he ever truly earned. He was awarded the Order of the Red Banner "for outstanding services over a period of many years to the peoples of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."

Philby's book is highly interesting, but not nearly as interesting as it might have been with more explicit information about his Soviet contacts. The only Americans for whom he has a good word are "the brave Rosenbergs," executed after being convicted of nuclear espionage. Allen Dulles is "bumbling," J. Edgar Hoover "a bubble reputation." He insinuates that the CIA was responsible for the assassination of the Ukrainian nationalist, Stepan Bandera, although the Soviet agent who committed this and other crimes made a detailed confession in a German court.

What is one to make of this addiction to communism on the part of a young Englishman of good education and obvious talent? Philby offers a kind of *apologia pro vita sua*; but this does not explain why his infatuation with communism, which would have been psychologically understandable half a century ago, survived the horrors of Stalinism and the drab realities of Soviet life.

—WILLIAM HENRY CHAMBERLIN