

# Kim Philby: The spy saga rolls on

by Allen Douglas

On April 10, *The Sunday Times* of London completed a four-part interview series with former British intelligence executive, now Soviet KGB general, H.A.R. "Kim" Philby. Conducted in January by *Times* reporter Philip Knightley, over six days of visits at Philby's apartment in Moscow, this is the first interview given by Philby to a Western journalist in 25 years. For weeks, the series has been the subject of intense speculation and gossip in Britain, Canada, Australia, and the British Commonwealth generally. Though less noticed by the general public in continental Europe and the United States, it has received the meticulous attention of a team at the Langley headquarters of the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.

Throughout, *Times* journalist Knightley attempts to portray his meeting with Philby as the natural, casual, almost spontaneous outcome of a 20-year-long exchange of letters between the two men. Bits and pieces of intelligence matters are dropped in between descriptions of sumptuous feasts of black and red caviar, smoked sturgeon and salmon, pickled herring, vodka, several kinds of Georgian wine, and liberal doses of Johnny Walker Red. But the chat between two old friends manages to convey an enormous amount of disinformation on some of the most sensitive intelligence issues of the 20th century.

## The lies

There is, first of all, the matter of who Philip Knightley is and why he was granted this journalistic coup. His pen pal relationship with General Philby began when Knightley sent Philby a copy of his 1968 book, *The Philby Conspiracy*, written with two colleagues at the *Times*, Bruce Page and David Leitch, a work widely viewed at the time as a "damage control" effort by a tainted faction of the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). As one American with decades of experience in counterintelligence matters put it, "I would take anything Philip Knightley says with a large grain of salt. A very large grain of salt. He is an apologist. Let me put it

this way—he shades the truth to the advantage of the Establishment. He gains access to material, and so he shades the material because of that." Apparently, Knightley's earlier "shading" was deemed insufficient for the present, because in portions of the current interviews he was willing to virtually rewrite or conceal his own earlier material on the subject.

The Knightley/Philby disinformation is of two types. On the lower level, there are the lies, or "shading," which involve specific factual material regarding "agents, sources, and methods." Important though they be, these are subordinate to the real disinformation, which is strategic in nature and bears upon the almost century-old "Great Game" conducted by the British (and American) Establishments with the Bolshevik Dynasty of Russia. These interviews open a new chapter in that game—the attempt to establish the perception of Philby as a British SIS "triple" all along. We begin with the lower level.

In *The Philby Conspiracy*, Knightley made a good case for the fact that, even after he was expelled from Washington in 1951 as a suspected Soviet spy, Philby was still employed by British SIS, working out of the British Middle East Office in Cyprus. During that period, Knightley reported, Philby's specialty was operations into Soviet Armenia, in part through Cyprus's Armenian community, where Philby had close ties. In the current interviews, the 1951-55 period is virtually blacked out, and Knightley only reports Philby's activities when he began working for the SIS again in 1956 under journalistic cover, after having been formally cleared of being a Soviet spy by Prime Minister Harold MacMillan in a speech to the British Parliament.

Likewise, Philby's "escape" from Beirut to the Soviet Union receives a whole new light. In his book, Knightley argued that Philby most likely escaped overland into Soviet Armenia, using connections with Beirut's Armenian community, which he had had since his Cyprus days. Now, in response to Knightley's question, "So you left Beirut for Russia. How did you go? Sea or overland?" Philby replies, "That's a KGB operational matter that I can't discuss." Then, in a carefully staged pas-de-deux based on the date on which Philby says he arrived in the Soviet Union, Jan. 27, 1963, Knightley hastily concludes, "The most obvious theory is the most likely to be correct. The Soviet freighter *Dolmatova* was in Beirut Harbor on the night of January 23 and it is less than five days' sailing to the nearest Soviet shore on the Black Sea."

But what happened to the Armenians, both in the escape, and in the 1951-55 period? Does that question, perhaps, also touch on "KGB operational matters"—such as the KGB-orchestrated riots in Armenia and Azerbaijan in February 1988, or the current intensified campaign for Armenians in the diaspora to return to the (Soviet) Armenian homeland? Or, perhaps, the arrival in the Los Angeles area of hundreds of Soviet Armenians per month, allegedly fleeing the KGB-

directed pogroms, among whom, U.S. intelligence officials are certain, lurk highly trained KGB officers? The famous Ogorodnikov-Miller spy case, where KGB agent Svetlana Ogorodnikova recruited FBI agent Richard Miller, was reportedly run through Soviet-controlled channels in the Los Angeles Armenian community.

Knightley and Philby present a new version of what Philby (and by implication, his predecessors in the flight of spies to Moscow, Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean) did after their defections. According to previous information reaching the West, MacLean and Philby, at least, played a major role in the revamping of the Soviet secret services in the wake of Stalin's death and the 20th Party Congress in 1956. One of the major features of this reorganization and expansion was the establishment of Soviet "think tanks" on foreign affairs, such as the Institute on the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) and the U.S.A.-Canada Institute, presently headed by Georgi Arbatov. By the late 1950s, MacLean was a prominent British affairs specialist for IMEMO. Philby, according to reports, helped to establish "the new KGB," particularly when Andropov became the agency's KGB chief in 1967.

But now it turns out—according to Knightley/Philby—that Philby was going great guns from his defection in 1963 until 1967, at which point he "felt frustrated and fell into a deep depression, started to drink heavily again, and worst of all, became prone to doubt." Knightley jumped in to buttress his friend's remarks, "I know from other sources that Philby was not just drinking heavily, he was drinking in an almost suicidal manner." This should be compared to, among other things, former CIA counterintelligence chief James Angleton's statement when asked if Philby had stopped drinking wildly after his defection, "Yes, he stopped it from the moment he arrived in Moscow."

Another, most glaring area of disinformation in the Knightley/Philby interviews, is their defense of British Establishment figures, who have either been tainted by their association with Philby or charged outright with being Soviet moles themselves.

Most striking are the defenses in the interviews, of former Internal Security Agency (MI5) chief Roger Hollis, a Philby friend widely suspected of having been a Soviet mole; and of Lord Victor Rothschild, whose own alleged Soviet agency was the subject of a debate on the floor of the British Parliament in late 1986. In Hollis's defense, Philby reports an alleged incident in which Hollis tried to catch Soviet mole Anthony Blunt "off guard" by suddenly calling to him using his suspected cover name, "Elli." Rothschild, says Philby, tried to do the same thing to him. Also, it now turns out, according to Knightley/Philby, that it was none other than Lord Rothschild who allegedly blew the whistle on Philby as a Soviet agent in 1962, when he reported to MI5 the comments of longtime Philby friend Flora Solomon, to the effect that Philby had always been a communist. Knightley: "Do

you accept that it was Flora Solomon's statement to Victor Rothschild that finally pointed the finger at you?" Philby: "Yes." Rothschild had not only been an intelligence colleague of Philby's, but a close friend as well. Yet, when the matter came up in 1987, Lord Rothschild told the *Daily Express* of Britain that he "had met Philby once only."

### **Philby: 'Ours all along'**

According to sources in Britain, Philby floated a trial balloon in November 1987, about the possibility of visiting Britain once again. A flurry of activity by his old friends in SIS "who had always believed in his innocence" made the matter serious enough that Tory MP Rupert Allison tabled a question in Parliament asking for assurance that if Philby did return, he would be prosecuted for treason. Yes, said Attorney General Patrick Mayhew, he would be.

Though the trip never took place, the propaganda campaign to recast Philby as a "triple," working for British SIS all along, is moving ahead, and was a prominent feature of the Knightley/Philby interviews. Knightley: "There are still those who say that one day you'll come home and reveal that you've been a double agent, or a triple agent all along, really working for Britain." This is buttressed by Philby's observation that former MI5 officer and historian Hugh Trevor-Roper noted, in a book he wrote on Philby, that "he thought I had never done England any harm. In my terms that is certainly true, but I was surprised and touched that he thought it was so in his terms, the terms of an old-fashioned Tory."

This line, that Philby was "ours all along," is also given prominent play in the recently released biography of Sir Stewart Menzies, "C," the British intelligence chief who sponsored Philby to some of the most sensitive positions in British intelligence. Anthony Cave Brown, its author, recounts the contact which "C" maintained with Philby all during his Moscow years.

There is a perverted truth to this line of argument. Philby has been and is now, a "triple," working not for the nation of Britain, but—at the same time as he serves the KGB—working on behalf of a very powerful faction of the British (and American) Establishments, to whom their own countries are mere playthings. These people have a strategic deal with the Soviets, the New Yalta scheme, which calls for ceding most of the world to Soviet domination, in order to eliminate sovereign nation states (which they hate), and establish an imperial ordering of world affairs. Philby's remarks on Andropov and Gorbachov, with whom these deals have been struck, and who are thus the heroes of the Anglo-American Establishment, bring the deeper truth of his career clearly into view. "I have told you about my doubts and there have been ups and downs. The Brezhnev period was stultifying and I had a very difficult time under his leaden influence. But Andropov was a fine man and a fine leader—a tragedy he died so soon—and in Gorbachov I have a leader who has justified my years of faith."