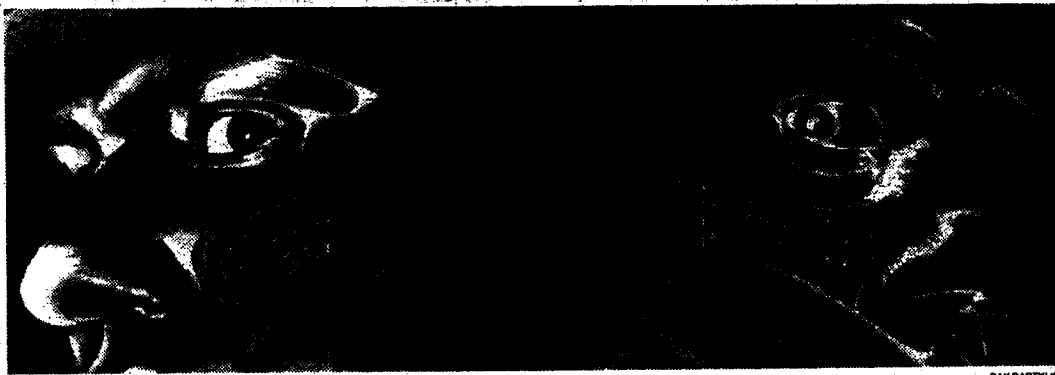


They Led Four Lives 1-1-95

Both Kim Philby and his father were masters of intrigue and duplicity.



RAY BARTKUS

TREASON IN THE BLOOD

H. St. John Philby, Kim Philby,
and the Spy Case of the Century.
By Anthony Cave Brown.

Illustrated. 677 pp. Boston:

A Marc Jaffe Book/Houghton Mifflin Company. \$29.95.

By Zara Steiner

OF books about Kim Philby, there will be no end. As a man who contributed to the destabilization of three intelligence services — the Nazi Abwehr, the British Secret Intelligence Service and the American Central Intelligence Agency — Kim Philby was one of the most successful spies of our time. As head of the counterespionage branch of the S.I.S. and liaison officer with the C.I.A. in Washington, this remarkable mole was able to inflict incalculable damage on the West's intelligence networks and continued to do so even after being identified as a Soviet agent.

Anthony Cave Brown, the author of "The Last Hero: Wild Bill Donovan," had the inspired idea of doing a double biography, linking H. A. R. (Kim) Philby (1912-88) and his father, H. St. John Philby (1885-1960). Both men were rebels against the British establishment that nurtured them. Both led double lives and served foreign masters. Each was possessed by a nihilistic streak that made him an archdisrupter and a master intriguer. There were sharp differences that Mr. Cave Brown underplays. The rebellions of St. John (pronounced SIN-jin) were open and public; those of Kim were covert and concealed. St. John's Fabian Socialism and conversion to Islam must be distinguished from his son's embrace of Soviet Communism. There is, nevertheless, enough substance in the Shakespearean reference of Mr. Cave Brown's title, "Treason in the Blood," to illuminate the lives of two extraordinary figures.

The early chapters on St. John, making good use of Elizabeth Monroe's authoritative "Philby of Arabia," provide an intriguing portrait of a key player in the emerging Middle East. St. John, a brilliant scholar at Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, began his career in the Indian Civil Service before 1914 and was involved in the Arab revolt during World War I and the subsequent contest between the British-backed Feisal, the Hashemite prince who led the Arab revolt, and Ibn Saud, the all-powerful ruler of postwar Saudi Arabia, for the leadership of the new Middle East. St. John was highly intelligent, a man of exceptional physical courage, famous for his exploration of the Empty Quarter of southern Arabia, restless and ambitious. He became the intimate and the chief foreign adviser of Ibn Saud.

Already in the 1920's he was considered unreliable, dangerous and disloyal by the authorities in London. It was St. John who arranged for the rich Saudi oil leases to go to the Americans instead of to the British in 1933.

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Yet such was his influence with Ibn Saud and so profound was his knowledge of Middle Eastern politics that he was subsequently enlisted by both London and Washington, often in their intrigues against each other, notwithstanding his brief wartime imprisonment as a potential threat to British national security.

One of Kim Philby's favorite and most intelligent Soviet controls, Arnold Deutsch, reported to Moscow that Kim suffered from a tyrannical father who had "repressed all his son's desires." Mr. Cave Brown shows the degree to which St. John, absent throughout much of Kim's early life, became his hero and role model. It was the father who insisted that the son be properly educated at Westminster School and at Trinity. In countless letters to his wife from his second home in Saudi Arabia, he set the standards of academic excellence to be demanded from his son.

St. John's introductions to old and faithful acquaintances in key places were critical to Kim's career. His special position in the Middle East was of crucial importance to both Moscow and London when Kim, already under suspicion, became station chief of the S.I.S. at Istanbul in 1947. And in 1956, after the younger Philby was publicly cleared of espionage charges by the Prime Minister, the decision by British intelligence to reactivate him in Beirut, ostensibly as a correspondent for *The Observer* and *The Economist*, was directly connected with St. John's move to Lebanon.

Mr. Cave Brown has expanded on the details of the Kim Philby story from some new sources, but mainly from numerous interviews with British, American and Russian contacts. "The Philby Files: The Secret Life of the Master Spy," by the Russian writer Genrikh Borovik, which used released K.G.B. documents, seems to have come out in Britain too late for inclusion. (It is only now being published in the United States.) There are peculiar problems in writing about spies, compounded in this instance by Kim Philby's incredible capacity to lie and by his genuine enjoyment of lying. "My Silent War," his best-selling autobiography, was a tissue of purposeful falsehoods. Pure charm and high intelligence were used to mislead interviewers and biographers.

It cannot be said that Mr. Cave Brown, despite all his digging, has successfully penetrated the Philby smoke screen. The author is often elusive on what Kim Philby actually did, on how much damage he inflicted and how many agents' lives his activities cost. After walking through the looking glass, Mr. Cave Brown seems to have been caught up in the hall of intelligence mirrors. This is particularly true of his discussions of Kim Philby as a double or a triple agent and his treatment of James Jesus Angleton, the C.I.A. head of counterintelligence and Philby's American contact, thought by some to have been the super mole in the Great Mole Game.

To be fair to the author, even the K.G.B. did not trust its "bourgeois spy," and as early as 1942 unjustly suspected him of being a double agent. Extreme Soviet paranoia explains why, except for a brief period under Yuri Andropov, the K.G.B. virtually ignored Philby during his Moscow exile. In Mr. Cave Brown's sometimes gripping but frequently tedious pursuit of the intricacies of the legendary spy hunt, the central threads are easily lost. The unmasking of Kim Philby will have to continue. □