Harold: Old version I forgot to send see Wedge by Hutter !!

In bed with Bolsh

Comintern impresarios, KGB spies and their well-meaning vic

The party schools in the old days were formidable. It was bare boards, no drink or sex, and an unremitting exposure to the texts of Marxist-Leninism. In itself this constituted a training in boredom – a very valuable one for men and women whose activities abroad, on trade-union or newspaper committees, would have to involve out-boring their rivals. But beyond that, Marxist-Leninism did give them a sort of political ready-reckoner for the immediate understanding of foreign countries. The Soviet agents described in Stephen Koch's *Double Lives* were remarkably good at their work.

"I must go to Spain", said Lillian Hellman – a Soviet agent, according to Koch. And it was in Spain, during the Civil War, that the Communists really learned the trade of penetrating and spying on the West. Here, after all, was a country of the type that might easily go Communist. It had blustering, badly paid generals; it had an imperial tradition, looking down on minorities and foreigners; it had too many peasants; there was an Islamic influence; industrial growth was patchy; there were noisy minority peoples; the trade unions were divided between anarchists, socialists and Communists. Soviet strategy was to let the Civil War drag on, dividing the West; that meant keeping the Republican side going, but not in sufficient strength to win.

The politics of the Republican side therefore had to be controlled. The Communists sent out people who understood all of this. They could size up the bibulous liberals with their messy adulteries (as they did with Jan Masaryk and other liberals in Prague later on); they could make their Leninist appeal to minorities, to women, to all who resented the backwardness of Spain. Where necessary, they could bloodily put down, as they did with POUM in Catalonia, anyone who was serious about revolution. Koch does not include in his bibliography an important book by the Trotskyist Pierre Broué, *Staline et la Révolution*, based on Moscow archives, which demonstrates how far this process went. The Spain that Franco conquered had become a Communist front.

"Anti-fascism" covered much. Later, when it came to the Resistance of the Second World War, and the take-over of Central Europe, the techniques developed in Spain were used again, to great effect. And an important part of the story was the recruitment of agents who could plausibly steer anti-fascism in a Communist direction, indicating who might be bought, who cajoled, who blackmailed, and who killed. These agents included people who were prominent in European and American cultural life.

The Comintern spies were far brighter than the Nazi ones, and had a much better understanding of how to deal with "capitalism". Koch has written a wonderful set of essays about this, although in terms of scholarship the book is rather wild (his sources omit some important books, including Arkady Vaksberg's *Hotel Lux*). He hangs the essays on one peg – the career of Willi Münzenberg, a communist-capitalist who did Moscow enormous service as "impresario" for the Comintern.

Koch does not say when Münzenberg was born (probably no one can), but suggests he was the son of an alcoholic inn-keeper in Thuringia. Standard Wilhelmine leftism led, in 1917, to his putting Lenin on the train at Zurich; then he became a Communist member of the Reichstag in the Weimar Republic. Münzenberg was one of those curious characters who are as good at capitalism as they are sympathetic towards Communism – Robert Maxwell, and probably Armand Hammer, being two recent exemplars of a tradition that goes back to Engels himself, and includes one Parvus-Helfand, who organized Lenin's return in 1917, and who made his money from the operations of the Turkish tobacco

NORMAN STONE

Stephen Koch

DOUBLE LIVES
Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the seduction of the intellectuals
419pp. HarperCollins. £20.
0 00 255516 6

Oleg Kalugin with Fen Montaigne

SPYMASTER
My 32 years in counter-intelligence and espionage against the West
374pp. Smith Gryphon. £15.99.
1 85685 071 4

monopoly.

Münzenberg amassed money through the media, running two very popular newspapers, taking an interest in film, and co-operating with the Brecht–Piscator theatre (later on, he arranged Brecht's Soviet subsidy). Along the way, he developed relations with the adepts of Weimar Culture – the Eisler family, for instance – which helped when they emigrated, after 1933, to the United States or elsewhere in the West. Meanwhile in Berlin, he lived it up – a chauffeur-driven car, a smart flat on the Kurfürstendamm; parties that everyone went to. After 1933 – he had a dramatic escape from Germany after the

Bolsheviks

ɛs and their well-meaning victims

Reichstag Fire, or, at least, he claimed that he did: it is just as likely that he made an arrangement with the Nazis – he set up in Paris, and carried on with western Europe as his stage, as before. In 1940, on the run, he hanged himself – or perhaps, as some of his associates thought, he was hanged by Otto Katz, a bad egg whom Arthur Koestler knew quite well. After 1945, Katz went back to Prague, and was a victim of the Purge trial of 1952.

Katz possessed, as Koch says, a sort of smoky charm, and had many affairs (one he claimed was with Marlene Dietrich). Münzenberg had acquired the Prague-Jewish Katz in Berlin; Katz had been a friend (or so he said: I do not take anything that any of them said on trust) of Kafka and Max Brod; one of his close associates was the *Zivilisationsliterat* Egon Erwin Kisch. With Walter Benjamin in tow, he could talk anything to do with "the Modern" – psychoanalysis, Dada, Bauhaus – in several languages, in which he could write as well as speak. He knew the world of film and had a close association with Expressionist theatre and Piscator. It seems Katz embezzled 100,000 marks, and Münzenberg had to save him. He was packed off to Moscow where Münzenberg had connections with the Soviet film industry.

In 1921 and 1922, there had been a catastrophic famine in central Russia. The Bolsheviks appealed for the support of the international working class; Münzenberg suggested to Lenin that the progressive elements of the West might also help. Accordingly, Gorky set up a committee, and the international well-meaning – Americans in the lead – sent food and personnel in great numbers. This embarrassed the Bolsheviks, who could see a Russian public forming that was not dependent on them; they closed the committee down. One result was, incidentally, the Hoover Institution in Stanford, California, to which Herbert Hoover donated considerable funds to demonstrate the falsity of the doctrines of Karl Marx (through astute purchasing in Russia, the Institution acquired the best collection of late-tsarist documents in the West).

Organizing cultural events, at which a pro-Soviet platform would be mounted, was a chief activity; Münzenberg would make himself known to such "sympathetic" figures as Romain Rolland, André Gide and Thomas Mann, and steer them towards Stalin. There were also what Nina Berberova called "the Kremlin ladies" – an *émigrée* princess who had married Rolland, perhaps even Moura Budberg (aka "Bedbug"), who dodged between Wells and Gorky, after a spell with Sir Robert Bruce-Lockhart. In time, as Koch says, "once a fashionable opinion was launched, it would quite spontaneously develop and grow among the ranks of enlightened people". Katz's assistant, Gibarti (one of the many Hungarians in the network), dismissively referred to the spread of cultural left-wingery as "rabbit breeding". According to Koch, the Left Book Club in Britain was used for this purpose: Münzenberg set it up, as a calque of the original Weimar Universum-Bücherei, and on its board sat two agents – John Strachey and Victor Gollancz (the other member, Harold Laski, was merely an innocent).

All of this made Stalinism, in its way, respectable; but, through espionage, it could also appear idealistic and exciting. Another Hungarian, Theodor Maly, was extremely efficient in this: it was he who recruited Anthony Blunt, and through him, others. England at the time had its freemasonry of men who had been in bed with one another – Blunt led to Burgess, who led to Harold Nicolson, who led (as his Bodleian papers reveal) to Sir Archibald Clark-Kerr, later

Willi Münzenberg (far left) in Moscow, 1921, detail; from *Double Lives*

Lord Inverchapel, and His Majesty's Ambassador to Moscow and then to Washington. That network saved Burgess from exposure for an unconscionably long time.

Why Hungarians should have been so disproportionately represented among the Soviet agents is a good question. Perhaps it was an effect of that impresario quality that Budapest somehow cultivates. It is here that Robert Maxwell belonged: he was not really a "Czech", although Czechoslovak by citizenship. He was born in Ruthenia, which shortly before his birth had been north-eastern Hungary, and Hungarian would have been his first educated language (as distinct from Yiddish or Ruthene or Slovak). Maxwell, with Excellency Jay as his personal assistant, with his gift for theatre, his affairs, his non-drinking, his links with the KGB, his horrible ruthlessness towards the defenceless, and his capacity to gull the sillier parts of the Establishment and the City, was the natural successor to the chamber of monsters whom Koch has displayed. And his soul, courtesy of KGB satellites and derivatives of future commodity-deals, no doubt goes marching on.

Nowadays, its progress will involve advance knowledge of Russian commodity-sales and maybe also, through satellites, snooping on Western financial movements. The KGB had excellent access to such things, and some of its born-again capitalist adepts have been making a great deal of money for themselves. Oleg Kalugin describes himself, on his visiting card, as "expert" for a firm called "Intercon" with an address in Washington. In his past, he knew about KGB murders, including that of Georgi Markov in London. *Spymaster: My 32 years in counter-intelligence and espionage against the West* is Kalugin's memoir of a KGB which was

not as good as the organization described by Stephen Koch, but which understood many things, just the same.

There have of course been many defectors from the KGB, but Oleg Kalugin was the first internal defector – breaking ranks in 1990, when he took the democratic side and denounced his former colleagues. He portrays a thuggish, dim world, ruled by mistrust, and where any hints of superior cleverness – Kalugin is not sparing with his own trumpet – caused downfall. He himself was sent to the United States when still very young, under cover as a student-journalist: even as early as 1959, benevolent Americans naively encouraged exchanges of this kind, and of course the Soviet side sent informers. Kalugin, who had already done well with languages and much else, was lucky: a potentially valuable scientist with a Maoist wife offered his services, and was eventually spirited out to the Soviet Union. Kalugin continued to be very proficient in the United States, with diplomatic cover, and, still quite young, was brought back to Moscow to be deputy head of foreign counter-intelligence. Envy abounded. His own first recruit, the scientist, was caught grumbling that, if he had known how dreadful things were in the Soviet Union, he would not have bothered. These anti-Soviet sentiments earned him several years in a camp, and Kalugin was compromised – sent off, for the better part of the 1980s, to manage part of the KGB in Leningrad. There, he fell foul of the local hierarchy, especially when he reported on the party's corruption, and was forced into early retirement. His own protector had been Yuri Andropov, who, according to Kalugin, was the only man in the higher ranks of the KGB who had a brain and a strategy. He did not, however, protect Kalugin.

There were of course highly intelligent members of the KGB: as Alain Besançon says, "Là existent, en nombre, les plus beaux types d'homme nouveau que le Parti a été capable, en soixante ans, de former. Une sélection sévère, un solide esprit de corps, une impeccable éducation communiste, dispensée dans des écoles spéciales, enfin et surtout, une carrière matériellement privilégiée, intellectuellement intéressante, moralement prestigieuse . . . ." These people were quite often the most liberal part of the Soviet establishment: in that kingdom of the lie, they at least had a passing acquaintance with reality. However, the energetic and knowledgeable elements somehow did not reach the top under Gorbachev, and it all ended with the absurd scene of KGB chief Kryutchkov, presiding together with Yanaev, his hands all-an-alcoholic-tremble, over that farcical *putsch* in August 1991. The smart men of the KGB took Yeltsin's side.

Kalugin tells his story well enough, and, as with so many stories about espionage, the outsider will mainly wonder what the point of it all is. Recruits are mustered, defectors abandon ship, and information piles up and up, imaginary and frequently meaningless (it may be a consolation to the, I am certain, entirely innocent Professor Fred Halliday that my own KGB dossier is said to be larger than Toynbee's). There is indeed a sinister side, as when the dirty tricks department was used, at the Bulgarians' behest, to murder Georgi Markov in London for being rude about the Bulgarian dictator. However, though Kalugin knew about this, he did not approve – even though, as he says himself, he had been responsible for laying bombs in strategic places at Radio Liberty in Munich. He becomes rather indignant when the British Customs hold him up at Heathrow, as a possible murderer, or at any rate accessory before the fact. Otherwise these memoirs are not very interesting. The later KGB may not have been up to managing Russia, but some of its people have used their old contacts to rather good private effect; it is said that hotels in the Caribbean have been bought by them.

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Carry on bungling

Dick White's embarrassing post-war record

KEITH JEFFERY

Tom Bower

THE PERFECT ENGLISH SPY
Sir Dick White and the secret war, 1935–90
426pp. Heinemann. £16.99.
0 434 00080 9

Dick Goldsmith White was born in 1906 and educated at a minor public school from where he went on to Christ Church, Oxford. After a few years during which he flirted with the idea of earning his living from writing and enjoyed a spell of moderately successful schoolmastering, he was recruited into the British Security Service (MI5) – their first graduate officer – in 1936. During the Second World War, he worked on the famous "Double Cross" deception by which misinformation was supplied to the Germans through spies who had actually been captured and, for the most part, turned by the British. In 1953, he became director-general of MI5; three years later he was transferred to be chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), becoming the only man to have headed both intelligence organizations. In 1968, he left to become chairman of the Cabinet co-ordinating committee which oversaw the whole British intelligence effort, and in 1972 he retired.

In terms of the breadth of his experience and the professional heights he reached, White was one of the most eminent British intelligence practitioners of modern times. But the intelligence community he both served and led did not enjoy unalloyed success during the years he toiled as "shadow warrior" in Whitehall. Indeed, it could be argued that the period after the end of the Second World War (during which British Intelligence had contributed very positively to the Allied victory) was one of continual and distressing failure. Handicapped by personnel of varying quality who had been recruited by ludicrously insecure "old boy" methods, of whom many were incompetent, others mainly eccentric, and some undoubtedly effective spies, but for the wrong side, the British intelligence services presided over a series of scandals and embarrassments. The catalogue is lengthy; atom spies such as Klaus Fuchs and Alan Nunn May; Burgess, Maclean and Philby ("To find *one* Soviet mole, director-general, may be regarded as a misfortune . . ."); Buster Crabb; Profumo; Sir Anthony Blunt; Peter Wright and *Spycatcher*. It adds up to a pretty damning indictment for which Sir Dick White must take some responsibility.

At the end of this biography – which is very heavily based on interviews with White himself by both the author and the late Andrew Boyle (who first planned the work) – Tom Bower delivers an upbeat verdict. Thanks to White's efforts, Britain "for all its weaknesses, could boast, more than before, competent, loyal and productive intelligence services, respected throughout the world – by both friends and enemies". These intelligence services, he concludes, "were mirrors of White himself, the perfect English spy". But this conclusion dramatically contradicts the tone of the book as a whole, which is suffused with a persistent ambivalence concerning White's qualities as an intelligence expert. Bower (who appears to have found White a charming man) seems unable to make up his mind about him. In successive paragraphs, for example, White is described as a "natural leader", and then his practice of preferring "men of loyalty and experience rather than talent" is noted.

At one level, Bower damns with faint praise, and accords White's success to his skills as a grey man, a kind of bureaucratic chameleon – no doubt a useful intelligence trait – whose unostentatious administrative and diplomatic abilities enabled him both to protect his own intelligence agencies and, paradoxically, reassure his political masters that the nation's security was safe in his hands. At another, for all its urbanity and elegance, the book is a savage character assassination. White's early advancement was smoothed by his ability "to adopt a deferential attitude towards superiors". His over-compassionate atti-

Dick White (centre) with fellow athletes from the 1928 Oxford University Athletic Club

tude, squeamish credulity and sentimentality contributed to delays in uncovering Klaus Fuchs. Bower declares that White had a flawed understanding of Soviet espionage – not, one would think, a desirable characteristic for a counter-espionage officer. His "agreeable, placid and generous" character fundamentally handicapped the interrogation of Kim Philby in 1951 and let the traitor off the hook. As head of MI5, White had a "propensity to retain weak men and avoid the distress of dismissals". "Judgment of character", remarks Bower, "was not White's strong quality." This evidently contributed to the latter's repeated recommendation of – in Bower's view – inadequate men to high intelligence jobs: Roger Hollis and Michael Hanley to lead MI5; George Young and John Rennie to be vice-chief and chief respectively of MI6. When head of MI6 – Britain's foreign intelligence service – White demonstrated an "imperfect knowledge and indifference to the shifts and eddies of internal affairs in the Third World", and a "limited understanding of Arab politics". Bower credits White, too, with much of the responsibility for the "cock-up" which led to Philby's escape from Beirut to Moscow in 1963. In 1968 – right up to the moment when Soviet tanks crossed the frontier – MI6 discounted the likelihood that Czechoslovakia would be invaded, one indication of the "internal flaws which White had not removed". After only a year as intelligence co-ordinator, "White's patience and interest in the Co-ordinating Office began to diminish .... His motive for remaining was his desire to improve his pension." At the end of his career in Whitehall he shared "complicity" in the molehunt, stimulated by the claims of those such as Peter Wright, which both obsessed and demoralized the intelligence services in the 1970s and 80s. If White then was a "perfect English spy", one might be forgiven for wondering about *im*perfect ones.

But Bower is right to adopt a strongly critical approach; it is – or ought to be – the stance of any good intelligence officer. The British intelligence services, moreover, have for too long luxuriated in an environment of ostensibly reassuring obscurity which largely protected them from any informed criticism. But while the government tried to keep the lid firmly shut on the intelligence community, the field was left for mavericks, self-seeking journalists and disenchanted officers to feed unverifiable tales of intelligence derring-do, treachery and incompetence (or any combination of the three) to a credulous public readership. Recently matters have improved: the intelligence services have now been acknowledged publicly by the government and placed on a proper statutory footing. Decent scholarly studies have begun to emerge. Despite, or perhaps because of, the *Spycatcher* débâcle, increasing numbers of former intelligence officers have begun openly to contribute to the study of the British intelligence community. Sir Dick White's readiness to co-operate with Andrew Boyle and Tom Bower was part of that process, though he can surely not have anticipated how sharply (albeit posthumously) the latter would bite the hand that fed him.

The Perfect English Spy is not an academic volume, though with a very welcome "scholarly apparatus" of source notes and bibliography it goes further than most journalistic efforts in this field. As might be expected, Tom Bower has succumbed to the temptation to gild his narrative by rendering recollected conversations in the present tense – suggesting total recall on the part of his elderly informants and including suspiciously vivid details, such as facial expressions. There are, however, excellent illustrations, a number apparently supplied by White or his family. It is presumably a sign of the times – or of the anticipated market for the volume – that while Harold Macmillan and Harold Wilson are identified in the captions, President Kennedy is not. Or perhaps the youthful figure pictured with the CIA chiefs Allen Dulles and John McCone is someone else altogether.

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