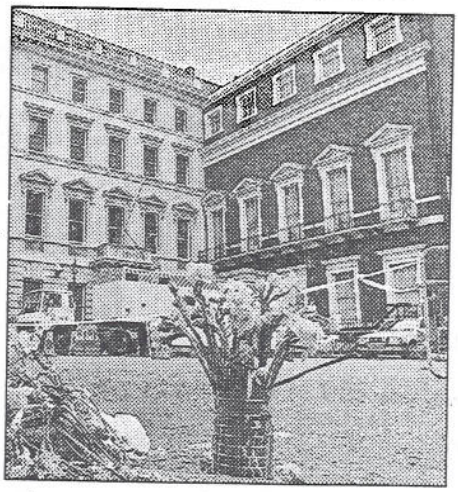
How Moscow supported assassinations overseas until Gorbachev came to power

A killing that shook the KGB



Death that disenchanted Moscow: WPC Fletcher and a tribute where she was killed

THE EARLY years of the Gorbachev era saw a change in the KGB's attitude to terrorism. Moscow's growing distaste for some of its Third World terrorist associates was particularly evident in the case of Colonel Gadaffi. The turning point in that relationship was the demonstration outside the Libyan "People's Bureau" in London in April 1984 when a Libyan intelligence man opened fire and killed WPC Yvonne Fletcher.

Pravda's report of the shooting was unusually frank, but the KGB knew more than *Pravda* told its readers. The day after the shooting, the London residency received a telegram from Moscow saying the KGB had reliable information that the shooting had been ordered by Gadaffi. An experienced hitman from the Libyan intelligence station in East Berlin had been flown to London to oversee the shooting. Thereafter Moscow tended to show some sympathy for Ronald Reagan's description of Gadaffi as a "flaky barbarian".

Moscow also looked askance at Gadaffi's willingness to supply money and Soviet bloc arms and explosives to the IRA. In the late Seventies, Moscow took the view that it was not responsible for what Gadaffi did with this material, but by the mid-Eighties it had become concerned about the adverse publicity. On a number of occasions, the IRA approached KGB officers from London who were in Belfast under journalistic cover. The approaches were reported to Moscow, which refused to have them followed up.

The KGB residency in Dublin was usually reluctant to make contact with any illegal group because of what it regarded as the near-impossibility of keeping secrets in the Irish Republic. Officers of the KGB claimed they could learn a surprising amount merely by listening to conversations in public houses frequented by Sinn Fein supporters. Moscow was less pleased with the Irish intelligence it received and, in February 1985, Nikolai Gribin, the head of the Third Department, visited Dublin to try to improve the residency's performance. By then Moscow was making increasing use of Dublin as a training ground for young agents to familiarise them with Irish and British life.

One incident which did involve the KGB was the murder of Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian emigré writer, in London in October 1978. Some months earlier, the Bulgarian Communist party general secretary, Todor Zhivkov, had sought KGB assistance in silencing emigrés like Markov, his former protégé, who were attacking him in the western media.

Moscow Centre made available the resources of a secret KGB laboratory. The first target was another Bulgarian emigré living in England. While on holiday on the Continent, surfaces in the room he was using were smeared with a poison which, once absorbed through the skin, would prove fatal and leave no trace, according to the laboratory. Though the target became seriously ill, he survived.

A new plan was worked out. The tips of some umbrellas were adapted to enable them to inject the victim with a tiny metal pellet containing ricin, a highy toxic poison made from castor oil seeds. Markov, then working for the Bulgarian section of the BBC World Service, was the first victim. Before he died in hospital, he told doctors he had been bumped into by a stranger on Waterloo Bridge who apologised for accidentally prodding him with his umbrella. A tiny stab wound and the remains of a pellet scarcely larger than a pinhead were found in Markov's right thigh, but by the time of the autopsy the ricin had decomposed.

Tomorrow: The spy who came into the cold, or how the KGB shunned Kim Philby

Cairncross: the Fifth Man revealed

Almost 20 years of speculation over the identity of the Fifth Man in the KGB spy ring inside British intelligence ends today in this second extract from a book co-written by Oleg Gordievsky, the top KGB officer and British mole who defected to Britain five years ago, and Dr Christopher Andrew

The KGB called the five Cambridge-educated British agents who worked for the Soviet Union "the magnificent five", a title given them after the release of the film *The Magnificent Seven*. Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Kim Philby, Anthony Blunt and the Fifth Man – identified for the first time today as John Cairncross – formed the most valuable group of moles in KGB history.

Kim Philby was the first to begin work for Soviet intelligence. After graduating from Cambridge in the summer of 1933, he spent most of the next year in Vienna, working with the Comintern underground. There he was recruited to the NKVD (as the KGB was then known) by the Hungarian Teodor Maly, a defrocked Catholic priest turned NKVD illegal.

In spring 1934 Philby returned to Britain with instructions from Maly to penetrate the intelligence services, however long it took him. To act as Philby's controller, Maly sent Arnold Deutsch, an illegal who had worked for him in Vienna, to live in London posing as a university lecturer carrying out research. Today, portraits of Maly and Deutsch hang in the secret "Memory Room" in Moscow, where the FCD (the KGB's foreign intelligence arm) commemorates its heroes.

Deutsch arrived in England with instructions to contact Philby's friend, Guy Burgess, a research student at Trinity College, Cambridge, who had already begun recruiting a secret "ring of five" to join Comintern's underground war against fascism. A more doctrinaire and less imaginative NKVD controller than Deutsch might well have concluded that the flamboyant Burgess, who flaunted his homosexuality at a time when it was still illegal, would be a liability rather than an asset. Deutsch, however, shared Burgess's contempt for bourgeois sexual morality.

Through Burgess, Deutsch became the controller of Donald Maclean, who entered the Foreign Office in 1935, and of the art historian Anthony Blunt, then a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge.

It was Blunt who talent-spotted the Fifth Man – the Trinity undergraduate John Cairncross. But for the conspiracy theories surrounding the career of Sir Roger Hollis, and the other false trails which confused the media molehunt in the Eighties, Cairn-

15 1990

cross might well have been unmasked as the Fifth Man even before Gordievsky provided the clinching evidence.

Had the KGB been less addicted to the conspiracy theory, it might have welcomed the confusion generated by the molehunt and the damage done by it to the reputation of MI5, which became the butt of numerous jokes suggesting it was an outstation of the KGB. Instead, there were frequent suggestions in Moscow Centre that the whole molehunt was some sinister British plot.

By the end of the Eighties the hunt for the Fifth Man had begun to resemble Monty Python's quest for the holy grail, but throughout that decade, when a string of books and newspaper stories were suggesting Hollis and various others as the Fifth Man, Gordievsky already knew his identity through his researches for the 1980 official history of the KGB, which gave him access to material showing that Cairncross was the missing link.

Although Cairncross is the last of the five to be publicly identified, he successfully penetrated a greater variety of the corridors of power and intelligence than any of the other four. In less than a decade after leaving Cambridge, he served successively in the Foreign Office, the Treasury, the private office of a government minister, the signals intelligence (sigint) agency GC&CS (the forerunner of GCHQ), and the SIS. Gordievsky recalls Dmitri Svetanko, while head of the British desk in the FCD, speaking of Cairncross with "awe, admiration and respect". Svetanko said: "Cairncross's achievements were the equal of any of the five except Philby."

> 'Cairncross penetrated more corridors of power and intelligence than any of the others'

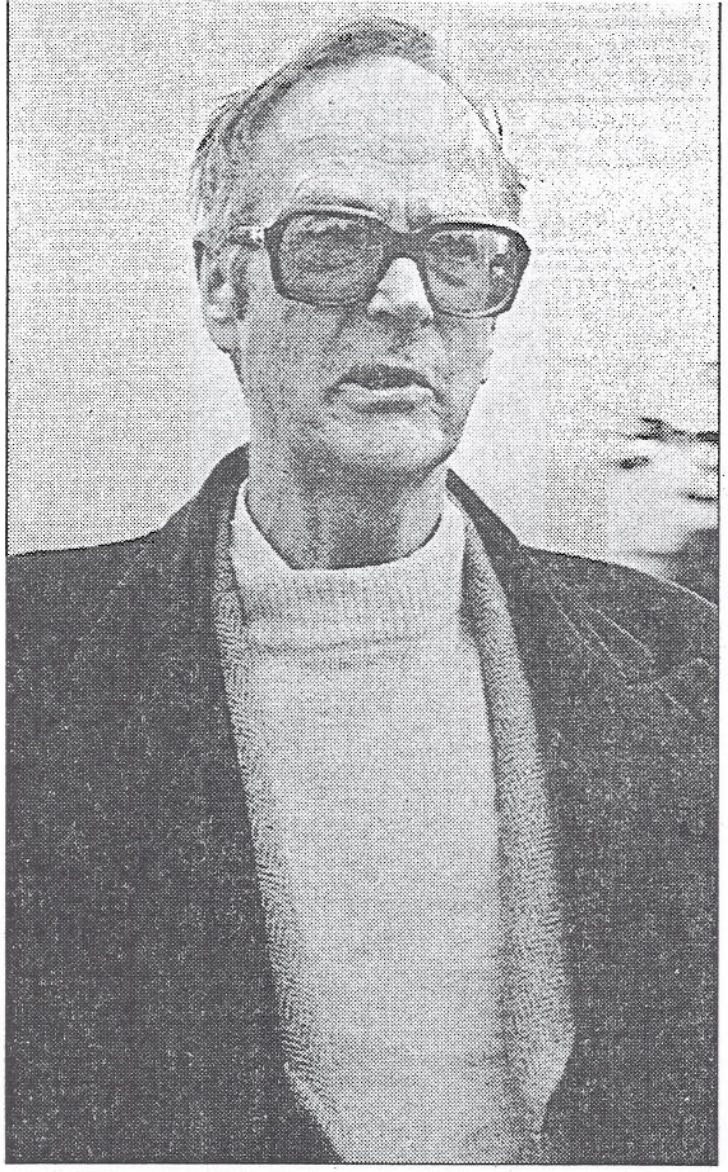
Cairncross was born in 1913 into a modest but intellectually gifted Glasgow family. His elder brother, Alec (who had no connection with the KGB), was a distinguished economist who became head of the government's Economic Service, Master of St Peter's College, Oxford, and Chancellor of Glasgow University. Like Alec, John won a scholarship to Hamilton Academy, near Glasgow. In 1930, at the age of 17, probably already influenced by the political traditions of Red Clydeside and the social injustices of the Depression, he entered Glasgow University where, for two years, he studied French, German, political economy and English.

He then moved to the Continent to improve his languages, gaining the *licence ès lettres* from the Sorbonne and winning a scholarship to Trinity College, Cambridge. By the time Cairncross arrived at Trinity to read French and German in October 1934, he was an open communist. His *licence* from the Sorbonne allowed him to skip the first part of the modern languages degree course and graduate with first-class honours and a Cambridge BA in only two years.

One of Cairncross's college supervisors in French literature was Blunt, who gave him a series of individual weekly tutorials (known as supervisions). Blunt's patrician manner and Marxist intellectualism, apparently aloof from the harsh realities of the class struggle, jarred on the passionate young Scottish communist. "I didn't like him," Cairncross said later, "and he didn't like me." Blunt, however, talent-spotted him for Burgess, who met Cairncross during one of his visits to Cambridge and established an immediate rapport with him.

Forty years later, in an interview in which he concealed most of his KGB career, Cairncross acknowledged that he had found Burgess "fascinating, charming and utterly ruthless". Burgess recruited Cairncross as a Comintern agent during one of his visits to Cambridge in 1935 and put him in touch with Deutsch. By 1936, Cairncross had broken all overt contact with the Communist party and applied to join the Foreign Office. He passed top of the FO entrance exam, 100 marks ahead of a brilliant young fellow of All Souls, Tom O'Neill (later a leading British diplomat), and joined Donald Maclean as a Soviet agent in the Foreign Office.

Over the next two years, Cairncross worked in the American, League of Nations, Western and Central departments of the FO without finding a real niche for himself. He quickly gained access to what he described as "a wealth of valuable information on the progress of the civil war in Spain".



The Fifth: John Cairncross, now aged 76 and living in France

Cairncross, however, lacked Maclean's easy charm and social graces. Though he tried to cultivate a wide range of contacts within Whitehall, he did not make friends easily. Sir John Colville, assistant private secretary to Neville Chamberlain and subsequently private secretary to Winston Churchill, found him a "very intelligent, though sometimes incoherent, bore . . . He was always asking people out to lunch . . . he ate very slowly, slower than anyone I've ever known."

Cairncross made detailed notes of his lunchtime conversations in Whitehall which he passed on to the NKVD. After Cairncross's first year in the Foreign Office, Maly suggested to him that he think of transferring to the Treasury, a department which, unlike the Foreign Office, the NKVD had yet to penetrate. He finally did so in October 1938. The Foreign Office was probably glad to see him go, having concluded that his awkward manner made him unsuitable for a diplomatic career.

In September 1940, the NKVD acquired a remarkable new insight into British government policy when Cairncross became private secretary to Lord Hankey, a former cabinet secretary who had longer experience of both the cabinet and Whitehall committees than anyone else in British public life. On the outbreak of war in September 1939, Lord Hankey had become minister without portfolio in Chamberlain's war cabinet, numbering among his responsibilities the intelligence services.

When Churchill succeeded Chamberlain in May 1940, Lord Hankey lost his place in the war cabinet (initially only five strong) but retained his ministerial rank as Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, continuing to receive all cabinet papers, to chair many secret committees and to oversee the intelligence services.

Too many government papers passed through Cairncross's hands for him to pass on more than a minority to the NKVD. But Dmitri Svetanko, head of the British desk at Moscow Centre in the late Seventies and early Eighties, told Gordievsky that Cairncross provided "literally tons of documents". One of the first was probably the third of Lord

The Four, photographed in the Thirties (from left): Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, Anthony Blunt

Hankey's six-monthly "War Appreciations", dated September 1940, which correctly forecast that German plans to invade Britain would fail and give way to a U-boat war against British shipping.

Among the committees chaired by Lord Hankey which must have been of particular interest to the NKVD was the scientific advisory committee, composed of some of Britain's most distinguished scientists, which met for the first time in October 1940 to co-ordinate the application of science to the war effort. For a time Cairncross served as joint secretary of the committee. He kept careful watch over Lord Hankey's continued access to top-secret war cabinet papers. When new war cabinet regulations in June 1941 limited the circulation of diplomatic telegrams to Lord Hankey, both he and Cairncross complained personally to the Foreign Office. The restrictions were quickly lifted.

> 'Throughout the media molehunt, Gordievsky already knew who the Fifth Man was'

The most important scientific intelligence to which Cairncross had access concerned the Anglo-American decision to build an atomic bomb. If, as is probable, Cairncross was the first to warn the NKVD, he ranks as the first atom spy.

The key section of the wartime intelligence community was the sigint agency GC&CS, based at Bletchley Park, in Buckinghamshire. Bletchley's success in breaking the Enigma machine ciphers used by the German armed forces enabled it to provide probably the most valuable intelligence in British history. Cairncross was the only member of the magnificent five to penetrate GC&CS. In March 1942, Lord Hankey was dropped from Churchill's government. A few months later Cairncross entered Bletchley Park.

Anatoli Gorsky, Cairncross's wartime controller, whom he knew as Henry, gave him money to buy and run a cheap car to bring documents to London on his days off. Though Cairncross spent less than a year at Bletchley, his time there coincided with both the turning of the tide on the eastern front and the point at which the Russians began to gear good intelligence to the conduct of operations.

Cairncross believed that the finest hour of his 15 years as a Soviet agent came before the battle of Kursk in the summer of 1943, when the Red Army faced Operation Citadel, the last great German offensive on the eastern front. On April 30 the British sent Moscow a warning of an impending German attack on the Kursk salient, combined with German intelligence assessments of Soviet forces in the area derived from the Enigma intercepts. But Cairncross provided the text of the intercepts and the unit identifications which were always omitted from the sanitised official version of Ultra intelligence — the product of breaking wartime enemy codes — sometimes supplied by Whitehall.

The intercepts most appreciated by the NKVD were a series which identified the disposition of Luftwaffe squadrons before the battle. Fearing that a German offensive might begin on May 10 (it actually started on July 5) Soviet bombers made a pre-emptive strike against 17 German airfields, selected with the help of Cairncross's intelligence. This series of three massive air raids was to be remembered as the greatest operation of the red air force in the Great Patriotic War. Cairncross received Moscow's special commendation for the intelligence he had supplied.

By now, however, the strain of transporting Ultra intelligence from Bletchley to London had become too much for Cairncross to bear. On the eve of the battle of Kursk, despite Gorsky's urging him to remain at Bletchley, Cairncross accepted a job in the SIS. For the next two years, he worked successively in Section V (counter-intelligence), the same department as Philby, then in Section I (political intelligence).

Like most wartime intelligence recruits, Cairncross was demobilised at the end of the war. Unlike Philby, he had not got on well with his secret service colleagues. His department chief during the last year of the war, David Footman, head of political intelligence in SIS, found him "an odd person, with a chip on his shoulder". After the war, Cairncross returned to the Treasury, providing intelligence to Boris Krotov and Yuri Modin, his post-war case officers, at monthly intervals. In 1947, Cairncross was closely concerned with the passage of the Radioactive Substances Act. Two years later he chaired the Treasury sub-committee which dealt with Nato finances. Meanwhile, Philby remained in SIS. Two other members of the magnificent five, Burgess and Maclean, continued careers in the Foreign Office until

their flight to Moscow in 1951.

The myth has spread that the Fifth Man provided the final warning of Maclean's impending interrogation, which led to his defection. In reality, Cairncross had nothing to do with the flight of Burgess and Maclean. The crucial tip-off came from Philby, then in Washington, who learnt of plans to interrogate Maclean from the MI5 liaison officer.

Shortly after the flight of Burgess and Maclean, a lapse by Blunt effectively ended Cairncross's career as an active Soviet agent. While searching Burgess's flat for incriminating documents, Blunt failed to notice a series of unsigned notes describing confidential discussions in Whitehall. Cairncross was later identified as the author.

MI5 began surveillance of Cairncross, and intercepted a summons to a meeting with his case officer. Cairncross turned up, but Modin did not. During subsequent interrogation by MI5, Cairncross admitted passing confidential notes to the Russians, but denied being a spy. He resigned from the Treasury and worked in North America for several years before joining the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the UN in Rome. Cairncross finally confessed to MI5 after further interrogation by the security service in 1964.

KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev is published on Thursday by Hodder & Stoughton (£20)