

## Exposing The KGB

by

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Few British workers take communists seriously, as is shown by the desisory votes won by the official Communist Party of Great Britain in general elections. To talk of “reds under the beds”, as I learnt to my cost when election campaigning in Bristol, is to invite disbelief and ridicule. Hence the extreme left’s policy of “entryism”, and the significance of Harold Wilson’s 1973 decision to withdraw the proscription which had prevented members of communist organizations joining the Labour Party — a move which a very senior security officer described to me as “the most important political decision since the war”.<sup>2</sup>

As a result, the reds today are in the bed and communists in positions of authority do not hesitate to commit acts and make speeches which, in many countries, would be punishable as subversive if not treasonable. This, of course, begs the question of what constitutes treason.<sup>3</sup> Is it a treasonable act for a trade unionist to attempt to prevent the sailing of a Royal Navy Polaris submarine by industrial action? It seems that in Britain today the principle of “industrial action” is held to be so sacred that virtually any disruption is condoned.

And what of the activities of the *Komitet Gosudarstvennoy Bezopasnosti* (KGB), the Soviet secret service? On August 10th, 1981, a second secretary in the Soviet Embassy in London was expelled for spying.<sup>4</sup> Viktor Lazin was the first KGB officer to be deported since the memorable occasion ten years earlier when 105 Soviet representatives were declared *persona non grata*.<sup>5</sup> After 1971 the velvet glove characterized the British approach. Even a junior Soviet military attaché who blatantly attempted to recruit a British army sergeant in a London public house was not expelled, though he did leave. There appears to be a great reluctance on the part of British authorities to act publicly against KGB activity. This does not mean, of course, that the Security Service does not act at all. There are often occasions when it is better to let a spy continue running his agents and to keep the net under observation. But the fact remains that, at a time when communist infiltration of Britain is extremely widespread — especially in the Labour Party and the trade unions — even as tough-minded a government as Mrs. Thatcher’s keeps quiet about the activities of the KGB.

This, I believed, is where the novelist who values democracy can strike a blow to defend it, dangerous as it is in literature to make political points. Conversations with various well-informed people convinced me that I should write a novel on the subject of current KGB operations in Britain. Much of the inspiration came from an analysis of the KGB’s UK mission written in 1977 by a former British diplomat, John Bruce-Lockhart, which takes the form of a simulated directive from the KGB in Moscow to its

Residency in London.<sup>6</sup> That such a directive exists in real life was demonstrated many years ago when Petrov, the KGB Resident in Australia, defected with many such documents.<sup>7</sup>

Petrov's plan of work included the recruitment of agents for straight espionage and the cultivation of influential citizens. Bruce-Lockhart believes that the KGB's mission in Britain is far more sophisticated and diverse, with strong emphasis on the disruption of the economy; the penetration of the trade unions, the media, the Labour Party and other organizations; scientific espionage; and the undermining of the NATO alliance and the European Economic Community. All this in addition to the constant search for defence information, in which the KGB is joined by the GRU, the Soviet military intelligence organization. These ideas matched my own experience and tentative conclusions. I fashioned my book as a good thriller which incidentally exposed a side of shop-floor activity not often written about. My own former employer, the *Daily Telegraph*, remarked that the "message is plain: there are enemies within". That was indeed my message, and I was extremely careful, in fictionalizing it, to stick wherever possible to real situations. The result was the novel, *The KGB Directive*, published in 1981.<sup>8</sup>

In gathering true material as the background for my fiction, in the period before Lazin's exposure, I started with the obvious question: did the fact that no Soviet "diplomat" had been expelled since 1971 indicate that the KGB had drastically reduced its activity in Britain? In France, Denmark, New Zealand and elsewhere well-publicised arrests had continued, with citizens being named as having KGB connections.

So let us return for a moment to 1971. The expulsions were provoked by the revelations of a defector, Oleg Adolfovitch Lyalin, an officer in Department V of the KGB, which in the mid-1960's had its primary duties shifted from assassination to sabotage. The then Attorney General, Sir Peter Rawlinson said of Lyalin in October 1971, that he occupied a post of importance in the KGB Division (i.e. Department V) whose mission "included the organisation of sabotage within the United Kingdom. . .the duties of this department of the KGB also included the elimination of individuals judged to be enemies of the USSR".<sup>9</sup> Apart from the expulsions, Lyalin's defection led only to the trial of two Cypriots. They pleaded guilty and the case produced none of the sensation expected.

But can it be supposed that the organisation of sabotage in Britain ceased? Hardly. When General Sejna, a Czech, defected<sup>10</sup> he revealed in an interview with the magazine *Paris-Match* that Warsaw Pact planning included a scheme for the disruption of the London underground system in peacetime, should the prospect of civil disorder warrant it. A cynic might remark that it scarcely needs a Warsaw Pact planner to organise problems in British industry, the militant trade union leaders having had it well under way for many years. But who prompts the militants, who funds them? And again, would the KGB still eliminate enemies on foreign soil? From what happened on September 11th 1978, one must conclude they would. On that day, Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian emigré who broadcast

for the BBC's Bulgarian service, and was a thorn in the flesh of the Bulgarian government, was mortally wounded in the Strand in London. A "passer-by" injected him with a poison capsule contained in the ferrule of an umbrella. At first he thought he had been accidentally jabbed by the umbrella. Then he became mysteriously ill and died. The assassin was never found. Experts on the subject believe that even if the Bulgarian security service carried out the job, the KGB provided the technology. It is the measure of British unwillingness to believe in such activity that a BBC interviewer recently attacked me<sup>11</sup> for suggesting that the KGB might be organising subversion in Britain and was afterwards reluctant to believe the well-documented death of Markov.

There were enough thoughts in Bruce-Lockhart's paper to germinate a dozen books. For the purpose of the novel, I tried to encapsulate two interwoven themes in my plot. The first was the aim of sabotaging a new British airliner project, and so weakening the ability of Britain to compete in the international civil aviation market. The second was the penetration, at local level, of the Labour Party machine and of the unions, so that moderates would be replaced with militant extremists.

It requires no imagination to believe that both these are real areas of activity in Britain today. The many years of strikes at British Leyland bear witness to the theme of industrial disruption. The launch of the successful new Mini Metro car was greeted by a strike. Equally, the reorganised *Times* newspaper has been very nearly killed off by a tiny, highly paid, group of militants.

The second theme is attested to by the growing number of Labour MPs defecting to the Social Democratic Party. As I write this, an old acquaintance, George Cunningham, recently the Labour Party's Home Affairs spokesman, has quit the party, attacking in particular the suppression of free speech at local party level and communist infiltration. "We have now got to the stage" he said "where it will be regarded as a triumph for moderation. . . if unions are not allowed to send communists as delegates to Labour Party institutions."<sup>12</sup>

The main reason why I wrote a novel, rather than attempting a factual product from my research, is that the British libel laws make it difficult, if not impossible, to describe the penetration of the Labour Party as the conspiracy which many people are certain it is. At the 1981 Labour Party Conference, the delegates voted in favour both of unilateral nuclear disarmament and withdrawal from the European Economic Community. The debate preceding the disarmament vote was chaired by an acknowledged former communist, Alex Kitson. He actually went so far as to prevent the Party's own Parliamentary defence spokesman, an opponent of unilateral disarmament, from addressing the delegates. The vote, as I have said, went the way the extreme left wanted, which must have pleased Brezhnev. But if I say more than that, I lay myself open to a libel action by Mr. Kitson.

I therefore set my novel in a mythical aircraft factory in a mythical city, called Frampton, which does, however, bear some resemblances to Bristol,

where I, myself, stood for Parliament in February 1974<sup>13</sup>, where the messiah of the extreme left, Mr. Wedgwood-Benn is an MP, and where the activities of the "Militant Tendency"<sup>14</sup> have been charted by a local Labour councillor, who has joined the SDP. I was also much helped by a Regional Officer of the Transport and General Workers Union, who has, on notable occasions, fought off militants. "Fought" is no exaggeration. When trying to resolve a dispute in the china clay industry, his car was wrecked and he was unable to send his children to school. During a holiday in the USSR, he was heavily compromised with a woman at a Black Sea resort. I used that. With his help, I quoted the precise Union rules under which a militant's mis-use of power can be halted (in union jargon they are not militants, incidentally, but "over-active members") in the hope that *union members reading the book will appreciate that the machinery for this already exists, even if it is seldom used. It exists within the Unions, just as it does in common law. Above all, of course, it exists in the ballot box.*

However, there remains the quantum jump of proving that the KGB is connected with the activity of the extreme left in Britain. The fact that if one is a regular visitor to Eastern bloc Embassies in London, as I was from 1967 to 1972 when I was Defence Correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, one is perpetually rubbing shoulders with British trade unionists, is hardly proof of their intimacy with the KGB. The insistence, in the autumn of 1980, of the Trade Union Congress in continuing with a visit to the official Polish unions at the time Solidarity was emerging is, however, an indicator of adherence to Stalinist thinking. (The Polish government wisely withdrew the invitation at the last moment.) The TUC has official relationships with every eastern European country save Albania. In 1972, the Labour Party's Secretary returned from Moscow and announced a "firm foundation for understanding and friendship".

It is indeed from such relationships that one must deduce what the probable situation is, and particularly from financial connections. But the one attempt by the authorities to prosecute publicly was a failure. In the mid-1960's the Labour MP Wilfred Owen who did not deny being remunerated for advising the Czech government on tourism, was sent for trial. But the jury acquitted him of the charge of being an enemy agent, although the judge awarded costs against him.

There is a further problem facing both the researcher and the KGB itself, namely, that the bulk of the militant left in Britain is Trotskyite in its beliefs. I was able to find a disillusioned former member of the Workers Revolutionary Party,<sup>15</sup> who worked on the *World in Action* TV programme. She has been on a course at the Red House in Derbyshire<sup>16</sup> where, she says, she was "taught to recognise a KGB man or a Stalinist at fifty yards". Apart from the absurdity of supposing that any such thing is possible, the anecdote illustrates the dislike, hatred even, felt by much of the militant left for what they call the "Bonapartist" Soviet bureaucracy. Yet the KGB must, perforce, be seeking ways to harness this revolutionary potential, since the left's aim of destroying the existing "capitalist" British society is also theirs.

In what can reasonably be called this war, “disinformation” is an important weapon. According to a KGB training manual, disinformation “assists in the execution of State tasks, and is directed at misleading the enemy concerning the basic questions of State policy, the military-economic status, and the scientific-technical achievement of the Soviet Union; the policy of certain imperialist states with respect to each other and to other countries; and the specific counterintelligence tasks of the organs of State Security”.<sup>17</sup> I am assured by friends in the intelligence business that the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament is partly Soviet funded. The range of other popular organizations penetrated by the left is almost infinite, from the anti-apartheid campaign to, believe it or not, the War on Want, which in 1978 was forced by the Charity Commissioners to drop a publication called *Poverty and Power*. Late in 1981 War on Want came under criticism again for its political activity. The criticism was based on its tax status as a charity being threatened because of behaviour as a political pressure group.<sup>18</sup>

An important factor in all such movements is the genuine sympathy felt for their aims by a very large number of young people. Thus, when I read in a girl’s magazine called *Nineteen*, which my teenage daughter had bought, that NATO is a threat to peace and that Russian SS 20 missiles are not, what do I think? That the woman journalist who wrote the article is an innocent idealist, or a knowing instrument of Soviet policy? Most journalists are more intelligent than the public gives them credit for. Can an intelligent woman really believe that Russian missiles are instruments of peace, but American ones are instruments of war?

Not all countries are as unwilling to challenge the agents of disinformation as Britain. In Denmark, on November 5th 1981, the police arrested a journalist named Arne Herlov Peterson. He was the author of a tract attacking the British Prime Minister as “the first British Conservative leader since Churchill who openly and rigorously calls for a crusade against the Socialist countries and war against the British working classes.” It was published in English a year after the arrival in Denmark of a KGB officer, posted in as a second secretary at the Embassy in Copenhagen, whose mission is now known to be the “orchestration of anti-NATO propaganda”. The man, Vladimir Merkulov, was expelled in early November 1981. When the police arrested Peterson, he was charged with having worked as a Soviet agent since the early 1970’s and was said to have had 23 conspiratorial meetings with Merkulov.<sup>19</sup>

My own belief, long before this case erupted, was that precisely the same happens in Britain and I based the principal KGB character in my book on Prokopy Gamov, a second secretary in the Embassy in London, who was deported in 1971 and whom I had met many times in the preceding eighteen months. I had during my visits to the Embassy, become friendly with the Military Attache, Major General Nemchenko, who one day invited a number of prominent journalists to dinner. We were like debutantes at a ball, each allocated to “dance” with a particular diplomat. Gamov was mine.



Unusually, Gamov has re-appeared in the West and has, for five years, been on the Soviet delegation to UNIDO in Vienna. According to researchers working for the BBC TV programme *Panorama*, Gamov has not attended a single UNIDO meeting in those five years.<sup>20</sup> He is, in fact, so completely blown that he probably no longer cares about his cover. The purpose of his meetings with me was, I think, to spread the idea that there was a Russian agent in the Cabinet Office — a sophisticated example of disinformation. However, though our overt meetings were monitored by the Security Service, even now, no-one will reveal to me what they thought it was all about. Nor were they prepared to give assistance to the *Panorama* team, who were forced to find all their interviewees, except myself, in other countries.

This brings me back to the basic reason for having written a novel about the KGB. All my researches over several years, not to mention experience as a defence correspondent previously, lead me to believe that the KGB is very active in Britain and, worse, that public tolerance of near-treason in Britain is at a critical level.

Furthermore, there is little realisation that the KGB man posted overseas is not the thug depicted in James Bond films. He is well educated and intelligent, more likely to pass as a University lecturer than a policeman, the sort of man in whom it might seem safe to confide. The career officers, or “cadre workers”, of the KGB are likely to be employed in a wide range of cover activity: in Embassies, in trade missions, in the offices of Aeroflot, among TASS newsagency reporters. In April 1981 the Dutch government expelled a TASS correspondent, Vadim Vassilevich Leonov, who had been identified as a KGB officer and whose primary mission was covert contact with leaders of the Peace Movement. Virtually any Russian working for a government agency abroad is liable to be made a “co-opted collaborator” of the KGB, with obvious sanctions against himself or his family if he tries to refuse. It is a system which has been well documented by many defectors since Petrov, notably by Frolik.<sup>21</sup> It is, however, so foreign to the average Briton’s thinking that I doubt if he believes it can be so wide-ranging.

Happily, my book attracted wide attention and sold out in under three months. More important, there is now widespread alarm, not just in the media but at grassroots level in the Labour Party, at the penetration of Britain by the extreme left. Far more chilling than any fiction, was the political chicanery by which an extremist replaced a moderate as leader of the Labour Group on the Greater London Council within hours of Labour winning control at the 1981 elections. Since then a trail of local elections and Parliamentary by-elections, at Croydon, Crosby and Islington, have seen the left thrown out in favour of the Liberal/Social Democratic Party Alliance. Islington witnessed a turning point in British politics.

So there does seem reason to hope that the soil in which the KGB is so free to plant its seed may prove less fertile in future years than in past ones. But what we really need in Britain is a Gouzenko or a Petrov, and a government prepared without fear to prosecute their agents and contacts. Until that happens, perhaps the novelist has a role.

## FOOTNOTES

1. "Entryism" is a Trotskyite term for the infiltration, compromise and take-over of an existing non-Marxist organization, such as the British Labour Party.
2. Anatoli Golitsin, a KGB officer who defected to the CIA station chief in Helsinki in December 1961, was convinced that the unexpected death of Hugh Gaitskell, head of Britain's Labour Party, was the result of poisoning by the KGB. Golitsin believed that the KGB wanted Gaitskell out of the way in order to make room for Harold Wilson, whom Golitsin described as a "Soviet asset". See David C. Martin, *Wilderness of Mirrors* (New York, 1980), p. 151.
3. In Canada, High Treason and punishments are covered in The Criminal Code, sections 46 and 47. See M.L. Friedland, *National Security: The Legal Dimensions* (Ottawa, 1979), Appendix.
4. *Times* (London, 5 August 1981).
5. See John Barron, *KGB — The Secret Work of Soviet Secret Agents* (New York, 1974), p. 38. (The expulsions led to an emergency meeting of the Politburo at Moscow Airport. The Indian Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, was kept waiting while members considered the implications of Britain's action.) Lazin's relatively junior diplomatic rank provided cover: often, a KGB officer's real seniority may be considerably greater. In 1971 an overwhelming proportion of the second and third secretaries were revealed as KGB men.
6. The KGB section of an Embassy is always referred to as "the Residency" and its chief as "the Resident".
7. *Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage* (Sydney, 1955), pp. 353-7.
8. Richard Cox, *The KGB Directive*, published by Hutchinson's, London, June 1981 and by the Viking Press, New York, November 1981.
9. Barron, p. 433.
10. See Barron, p. 432; Josef Frolik, *The Frolik Defection* (London, 1975), pp. 136, 137.
11. On BBC Radio 4, 25 June 1981.
12. *Times* (London, 1 December 1981).
13. In the Bristol North-East constituency, as a conservative.
14. The Militant Tendency is Britain's largest Trotskyite group, controlling or influencing an unknown but considerable number of Labour Party constituency organizations. It publishes a paper called the *Militant* which costs more to produce than the entire constituency party revenue of the Labour Party. See John Hutchinson, "Red Britain in 1984?", in *National Review*, 11 December 1981.
15. The Workers Revolutionary Party (WRP), adorned by Vanessa Redgrave, is another Trotskyite group. See Hutchinson, *op cit*.
16. The Red House is the training school of WRP.
17. Quoted Deputy Director CIA, in *CIA Study: Soviet Covert Action and Propaganda*, presented to the Oversight Subcommittee, Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, House of Representatives, 6 February 1980.
18. *Daily Telegraph* (London, 20 November 1981).
19. *Ibid*.
20. BBC Television Channel 1 current affairs programme *Panorama*, 19 October 1981.
21. See Frolik, *op cit*.