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S. J. Hamrick. *Deceiving the Deceivers: Kim Philby, Donald Maclean, Guy Burgess.* New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2004. xvii + 297 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-300-10416-5.

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A New Twist to an Old Story?

Kim Philby, Donald Maclean, and Guy Burgess, the subjects of reflection of so many pundits and journalists over the years, are back once more in this new tale of Soviet espionage and British counterespionage in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War by S. J. Hamrick.[1] The author, a former Army Counter Intelligence Corps (CIC) draftee and analyst with the State Department's Intelligence and Research Bureau (INR), draws on his life experience in intelligence and two decades at the State Department to offer a new analysis of the case whose central figure, Philby, many have come to consider the *master spy* of the Cold War. Was Philby really successful at spying for the Soviet Union, and could he have been deceived by British intelligence, and the Soviets fooled? These are the two key hypotheses Hamrick explores.

To make the case that Maclean had been discovered spying for the Soviet Union earlier than 1951 (the time officially admitted by the British government), and that he, Burgess, and Philby were the pawn of a British two-year (1949-51) counterespionage operation (unbeknown to the United States) to deceive the Soviet Union with respect to the West's real nuclear retaliatory capability, Hamrick meticulously reconstitutes the events and drama that led to the defection of Maclean and Burgess to Moscow on May 25, 1951, and Philby's recall to London from Washington, where he had been the British Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) representative since 1949, immediately after (in 1963, he defected to Moscow too). To do so, Hamrick makes full use of the Venona transcripts (Soviet World War II cables transmitted to Moscow from New York and Washington) released by the National Security Agency (NSA) in several batches in the mid-1990s; selected American, British, and Russian archival materials; and all open-source material relevant to his case. Using the same set of sources, Hamrick additionally makes the point that during the period 1949-51, Philby did not have access to high-grade intelligence of decisive benefit to the Soviet Union that some authors assume he had. This is the period when Philby was in Washington, dealing with a CIA in its embryonic stage, faced with severe organizational and other difficulties. Although it is acknowledged in Soviet State Security (KGB) archives that Philby provided the Soviet Motherland significantly less intelligence than Burgess and Maclean, this does not speak to

its overall importance or its quality.[2]

Hamrick is particularly adept at finding holes and fallacies of omission or assumption in the material he perused. To make his case, however, he must fill in the blanks through logical deduction, often without any supporting and corroborating evidence other than the coherence of his propositions. Hence, he believes that despite their close cooperation in decrypting Venona cables, British cryptologists would have identified the code name HOMER as that of Maclean as part of their own decryptions of cables transmitted from London to Moscow, but would have refrained from sharing their success with their U.S. colleagues. The reason for omitting this information as part of their intelligence exchanges would have been to protect U.S.-British secret exchanges on nuclear weapons, of which Maclean knew a lot, from his time as a first secretary at the British Embassy in Washington, D.C., and which his exposure as a spy would have endangered. Furthermore, not exposing Maclean when he was discovered would have allowed the British government to mislead the Soviet Union, not only through Maclean, but also through Philby and Burgess. This would explain the posting each received in London and Washington.

Hamrick knows, though, that to adjudicate these matters once and for all, he needs to back up his arguments with the British intelligence files on Philby, Maclean, and Burgess, which may never see the light of day. Hamrick is therefore resigned, as Carl Schreck aptly noted, "to the fact that … Philby's legend and notoriety are unlikely to crumble."[3] New lights could be shed, however, once British intelligence scholar Christopher Andrew publishes his official history of the British Security Service, which investigated Maclean. Until we know more from British archival materials, Hamrick's work should remain a relatively useful contribution to intelligence studies, even though eminent historian Ernest May makes the point that Hamrick is on very thin ice throughout.[4]

Notes

[1]. For short biographical overviews of their respective lives, see *Secret Lives: Lifting the Lid on Worlds of Secret Intelligence*, selected by M. R. D. Foot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[2]. Peter Coleman, "Watching the Defector," *The Australian*, December 18, 2004.

[3]. Carl Schreck, "Secrets of the Service," *Moscow Times*, December 17-23, 2004.

[4]. Ernest R. May, "The Enemies Within," *The Washington Post*, January 16, 2005.

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