

interpretation, and the roles of the various actors in this ongoing drama that affects all our lives. ☉

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## **A SPY AMONG FRIENDS: KIM PHILBY AND THE GREAT BETRAYAL**

BY BEN MACINTYRE

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368 pages, \$27.

**Reviewed by Elizabeth Kelley**

If you enjoyed John Le Carré's *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy* or PBS' production of *The Bletchley Circle*, then you will surely enjoy *A Spy Among Friends: Kim Philby and The Great Betrayal*, by Ben Macintyre. Harold Adrian Russell ("Kim") Philby, was born into a British upper-crust family in 1912 and died in 1988. The book jacket notes that he was "the greatest spy in history," and this is not an exaggeration. While working for MI6, Britain's foreign intelligence agency, Philby was also providing information to the Soviet Union. As Macintyre points out, the nickname "Kim" coined by his father was particularly apt, as Rudyard Kipling's character of that name also had the ability to move between two worlds.

Macintyre is the author of several best-selling books about espionage, but *A Spy Among Friends* is much more than a spy thriller or even a biography of Philby. Rather, the book is about the complex relationship between Philby; his colleague at MI6, Nicholas Elliott; and American James Angleton, who eventually rose to become the CIA's counterintelligence chief. For decades, Elliott was a close

friend of Philby's. When suspicion of Philby's life as a double agent began to emerge, Elliott was his staunchest defender. Angleton had met Philby early in his career, and idolized him. When Philby was stationed in the United States from 1949 until 1951, Angleton regularly lunched with him at Washington, D.C.'s Harvey's Restaurant. Over martinis and oysters, Angleton freely and without reservation shared information with him on CIA activities, and Philby no doubt passed this intelligence on to the Soviets. When Philby defected to the Soviet Union in 1963 and the full extent of his espionage was exposed, both Elliott and Angleton felt personally and supremely betrayed.

How, then, was Philby able to move so easily between two worlds, particularly at the height of the Cold War? Macintyre does a fine job of painting the manners and mores of English society of that era and showing how Philby's pedigree, education, and conduct preserved his cover, or covers. Philby's father was Sir John Philby, a member of the Indian Civil Service and an advisor to King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia. Philby was educated at Cambridge. He belonged to the right clubs and socialized with the right people. He cut a handsome and charming figure. Certainly, no one who so perfectly embodied the establishment could betray the establishment.

If *A Spy Among Friends* has any weakness, it is that it devotes too little time to examining why Philby worked for the Soviets. We are told that he was repulsed by the Nazis, and that is a plausible explanation until the end of World War II. But why, then, did he continue, particularly during the remaining brutal years of Stalin's regime?

Just as we marvel at how Philby was able to escape detection, so, too, we wonder about how he was able to avoid prosecution by either the British or American governments. Again, much can be explained by England's vaunted sense of pride and decorum. Had Philby been tried in London, the extent and length of his perfidy would have been hugely embarrassing. So British authorities offered him immunity in return for a complete confession and full cooperation, and they insisted, all evidence to the contrary, that Philby's espionage had ceased in 1949—before he was stationed in the United States. This was done in order to avoid his extradition to the United States, which would have made the offer of immunity meaningless.

For those of us who are used to having our clients taken into custody, Philby's final years

are extraordinary. He was initially under investigation as early as 1951, after the escape from America of a British spy whom he allegedly had tipped off. Philby was eventually cleared, but he still lived under suspicion. Although he had resigned from MI6 and had difficulty maintaining stable employment, he preserved the patina of a gentleman. Approximately 10 years later, his treachery was fully revealed. Even after being confronted by and confessing to Elliott, Philby was allowed to remain free and roam the streets of Beirut, where he was worked as a journalist until he escaped to Moscow. *A Spy Among Friends* makes the case that this was exactly what Britain wanted and intended—that Philby would disappear and gradually fade from memory, with Britain preserving as much dignity and suffering as little embarrassment as possible. Given the lifelong friendship between Elliott and Philby, one can also argue that neither Elliott nor any of the others in his orbit wanted to see Philby's head placed in a noose. ☉

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