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British intelligence doing quite well

KGB's the one having trouble

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Espionage stories come in rushes; at the moment a number of Soviet agents working on British (and NATO) targets have been exposed, and the media is having something of a field day about the "leaky" British intelligence services.

In point of fact, they are doing quite well — it is the KGB which is having the leaks. Of four current cases, two were uncovered by British efforts, two by outside efforts (one by a Trotskyite fake); and not one of them represented a penetration of the Secret Intelligence Service — Britain's CIA. (One was an attempted penetration of the British Army, another a NATO penetration, the third a probable penetration of the Foreign Office and the fourth — the most serious — a successful penetration of Britain's national security agency at Cheltenham.)

The Geoffrey Prime case was indeed damaging, as much to the economy as to security. An expensive satellite surveillance project was compromised before Prime was exposed — by his wife, who turned him in to the police for sexual offenses against children. Security at Cheltenham will be tightened again — but it is always a problem at such institutions — in America as well as Britain. They employ hordes of people, mixing military personnel (on short tours) with civil servants, making it all but impossible to maintain a tight, uniform security program.

One case involved an Army enlisted man trying to sell documents to the Soviets; he was nabbed before he got to first base.

A third case involved a woman in the Foreign Office, stationed in Tel Aviv, who had taken an Egyptian lover. This is a standing problem, of which the Soviets are well aware. All embassies have numbers of mature, single career women working in them — executive secretaries or actual diplomats — and in countries with alien cultures they have a problem. From 8 to 5 they are members of the team — after 5, they're on their own. Embassy bachelors cut a wide swath among the local talent, married couples have their own social



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circles and single women are apt to be ignored. In Asia, Africa and the Middle East, it's hard to attract the interest of local males.

Enter the KGB. In Djakarta, Kinshasa or New Delhi, a charming Italian or Frenchman may suddenly appear with flowers, candy and theater tickets, and sweep such a prize off her feet. Only too late does the victim discover that Prince Charming has ulterior motives — like classified goodies — and it takes a brave woman indeed to then walk into the security office and confess, "A funny thing happened to me on the way home from the office."

Such Lotharios are especially risky if they are some other nationality than that of the country where the embassy is; they are quite apt to be Soviet Illegals — KGB officers under false, non-Soviet, identities. In this case, the Lothario was an "Egyptian;" he may indeed have been an Illegal, and may have been exposed by the Illegals Support Officer, Vladimir Kuzichkin, who recently defected to the SIS.

The fourth case also involved a KGB Illegal — who fell into FBI hands sometime before 1980. Using the identity of a German (who actually died years ago in the Soviet Union), he came to America via Canada, where he had apparently been the case officer for Hugh Hambleton, a Quebec professor who had spent five years as a NATO official in Paris. The use of an Illegal is *prima facie* evidence the KGB regarded Hambleton as important — the Canadians, regretfully, were unable to build a court case and Hambleton, his fangs drawn, was left at large. The British had no such

compunctions and arrested him the moment he set foot on their soil.

Hambleton displayed the classic symptoms of an exposed KGB. He didn't pass anything important, for heaven's sake — just, he-ho, trivial items on economics and oil policy which for some silly reason NATO had classified. Mere bagatelles! The COSMIC (NATO's "Top Secret" classification) stuff? Darned if I know, it must have gotten in by accident. Besides, he hadn't given anything to the Soviets; his case officer was a Frenchman and he was really a secret double agent all along!

This is an advantage of using an Illegal — who doesn't appear as a Soviet. When the British arrested Harry Houghton and his mistress Ethel Gee in the 1960s for passing secrets from the Portland naval research station to a Soviet Illegal (Konon Molody, using the identity of the long-dead Canadian Gordon Arnold Lonsdale), Houghton claimed he thought Lonsdale was an American naval officer. Such cover stories are arranged by the Illegal in advance — they make the agent feel more secure, with what looks like a plausible out. The courts, fortunately, don't swallow such guff; Houghton and Gee (not to mention Molody) had a number of years in the clink to ruminate on the perfidy of the KGB. Hambleton got 10 years.

There will always be penetrations of Western institutions by the KGB; only a proportion will ever be unmasked. The penetrations might be lessened, and the number unmasked raised, if the overworked counterespionage forces of the West were given more public support and not treated with derision on almost every hand. Actual abuses of their powers are minimal, despite the high tide of ego-trippers grabbing headlines by smiting them hip and thigh. They — we — need help, before we're robbed blind.

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