

## The Cloudburst

The FBI was in sorry shape when I reached Washington. It had caught a Tartar in the small person of Judith Coplon, a brilliant young woman employed in the Department of Justice, against whom they were trying to bring home espionage charges. When the evidence against her, obtained largely by illegal telephone-tapping, had hardened sufficiently to justify her arrest. Hoover sanctioned the necessary action, and Coplon was pulled in. She was caught in the act of passing documents to a contact, and the case against her seemed open and shut. But in their haste the FBI had neglected to take out a warrant for her arrest, which was therefore in itself illegal. The FBI could only effect arrests without warrant if there was a reasonable presumption that the suspect was contemplating imminent flight. As Coplon was picked up in a New York street, walking away from a station on the Elevated from which she *had* just emerged, the

purpose of imminent flight could not have been imputed to her by any conceivable stretch of imagination.

The illegality of the arrest was duly lambasted in court, but worse was to follow. Coplon, though caught red-handed, was resolved to fight to the end. She dismissed her first counsel on the grounds that he was too conciliatory to the prosecution; he was probably aiming, not at acquittal, which seemed a hopeless prospect, but at a mitigation of sentence. Coplon would have none of it. With a second counsel to assist her, she went over to the counter-attack and began harrying the FBI witnesses. She tied them in such knots that they admitted to tapping not only her telephone, but telephones in the headquarters of the United Nations. The court proceedings began to damage the public image of the FBI so severely that Hoover incontinently dropped the charges. It was characteristic of him that he reacted to the fiasco by finding a scapegoat. Harvey Flemming, the principal FBI witness at the trial, was fired. But Coplon went free. It was the triumph of a brave woman. Whenever her name was mentioned thereafter in the Department of Justice, an abusive adjective was attached.

The failure of the FBI in the Coplon case was by no means unique, or even unusual. I cannot speak of the record of the FBI in checking crime in the United States. With that side of its activities I had nothing to do. But I had a great deal to do with its counter-espionage work, and its record in that field was more conspicuous for failure than for success. Hoover did not catch Maclean or Burgess; he did not catch Fuchs,

and he would not have caught the rest if the British had not caught Fuchs and worked brilliantly on his tangled emotions; he did not catch Lonsdale; he did not catch Abel for years, and then only because Hayhanen delivered him up on a platter; he did not even catch me. If ever there was a bubble reputation, it is Hoovers.

But Hoover is a great politician. His blanket methods and ruthless authoritarianism are the wrong weapons for the subtle world of intelligence. But they have other uses. They enable Hoover to collect and file away a vast amount of information about the personal lives of millions of his fellow-countrymen. This has long been common knowledge, and it has brought Hoover rich dividends from the purse of the American taxpayer. There are few people in the world without skeletons in their cupboards which they would prefer to remain decently forgotten. The overt record shows that a distressing number of American congressmen have pasts that do not bear minute scrutiny. And what about the covert record held by Hoover? The mere existence of the huge FBI filing system has deterred many from attacking Hoovers totalitarian empire.

I am speaking of the McCarthy period. It might have been thought that Hoover would have resented the infringement of his monopoly by a Senator who claimed to have effected, single-handed, deep penetration of the Communist conspiracy in the State Department and other branches of the United States Government. Not so. Hoover knew that by merely opening his mouth he could have blasted McCarthy's pretensions for ever. But why should he have done so? By

raising a nation-wide spy-fever, McCarthy was creating conditions in which no congressman would dare to oppose increased appropriations for the FBI. What Hoover really thought of McCarthy became evident at my first meeting with him when I put the question point-blank. "Well," said Hoover in reply, "I often meet Joe at the race-track, but he has never given me a winner yet."

My first house in Washington was off Connecticut Avenue, almost directly opposite that of Johnny Boyd, the Assistant Director of the FBI in charge of security. It seemed a good idea to camp at the mouth of the lion's den for a short spell—but only for a short spell. The house was a small one, and I was soon arguing the need for moving to larger quarters at a safer distance, eventually settling on a place about half a mile up Nebraska Avenue. My principal FBI contact was Johnny Boyd, and I saw him several times a week, either in his office or at home. He was one of Hoover's original gunmen in Detroit—"the guy who always went in first" when there was shooting to be done—and he looked the part. He was short and immensely stocky, and must have been hard as nails before he developed a paunch, jowls, and the complexion that suggests a stroke in the offing. He had no intellectual interests whatsoever. His favourite amusement was to play filthy records to women visiting his house for the first time. He had other childish streaks, including the tough, direct ruthlessness of a child. By any objective standard, he was a dreadful man, but I could not help growing very fond of him.

Boyd lost no time in letting me know that he dis-

approved of my close contact with CIA. He seemed genuinely disgusted with its cosmopolitan airs. "What do they teach them in CIA, son?" he said to me one evening. "Why, how to use knives and forks, how to marry rich wives." He also had a deep suspicion of the social graces of the United States Navy. But, as I had thought in London, I got on with him provided that I did not try to be clever and endured his heavy taunts about my CIA friends. The first time I felt the rough edge of his tongue was (very fortunately) just before Peter Dwyer left for Ottawa. It so happened that the MI5 representative in Washington, Geoffrey Paterson, and we, received parallel instructions from London to take up a certain matter with the FBI. Paterson got in first and received a brush-off; he was told it was none of London's business. When Dwyer and I arrived soon afterwards to raise the same question, Boyd gave us a wicked look. "So that's the game," he said, laying down his cigar and purpling. "Geoffrey comes in and I give him a flea in the ear. Then what happens? Then you two come along and try it on. . . ." There followed a ten minutes' tongue-lashing against which all protests were useless. His fury was quite sincere, although out of all proportion to the nature of the issue which we had been told to discuss with him. What enraged him was a simple matter of office politics. It was his job to play MI5 and SIS off against one another so as to exploit any differences between us. And here we were, clearly ganging up against him. Yet that same evening he telephoned to ask me over to drink bourbon deep into the night. Not a word was said about the unpleasantness of the morning.

A sluggish trickle of information about the Embassy leakage continued to reach us. Apart from Dwyer, who was soon to leave, three members of the British Embassy staff had access to the material: Paterson, myself and Bobby Mackenzie,<sup>1</sup> the Embassy Security Officer, who was an old colleague of mine from Section V days. In the FBI, the officials concerned were Boyd, Lishman, who was then head of the anti-Communist section, and Bob Lamphere, a nice pudding native of Ohio who was responsible for the detailed analysis of the case on the American side. We were still far from identifying the source in the British Embassy, but during the winter of 1949-50 the net began to close round the Los Alamos source. The choice seemed to be between two scientists of great distinction, Dr. Peierls and Dr. Fuchs. It was Dwyer's last direct service to SIS that, by a brilliant piece of analysis of the known movements of the two men, he conclusively eliminated Peierls. Thereafter, the finger pointed unwaveringly at Fuchs.

The usual trouble arose over the nature of the evidence, which was not valid in law, but Fuchs, emphatically unlike Judith Coplon, provided the evidence against himself. Shortly after Dwyer had identified him as the Los Alamos source, he set sail for England on a routine visit. He was arrested on arrival and passed to James Skardon, of MI5, for interrogation. Skardon succeeded in winning his confidence to such an extent that Fuchs not only confessed his own part in the business, but also identified from photo-

graphs his contact in the United States, Harry Gold. From Gold, who was also in a talkative mood, the chain led inexorably to the Rosenbergs who were duly electrocuted. It is worth mentioning that Eisenhower explained his refusal to reprieve Ethel Rosenberg on the grounds that, if he did, the Russians in future would use only women as spies. It was an attitude worthy of the most pedestrian of United States' presidents.

There was another remarkable casualty of the Fuchs case. Hoover, who had contributed nothing to his capture, was determined to extract maximum political capital from the affair for himself. To that end, he needed to show that he had material of his own, and such material could only be obtained through the interrogation of the prisoner by one of his own men. He announced his intention of sending Lishman to London to question Fuchs in his cell. Paterson and I both received instructions to tell him that such a course was quite out of the question. Fuchs was in custody awaiting trial, and it was just impossible to arrange for his interrogation by anyone, let alone by the agent of a foreign power. I found Hoover in a state of high excitement, and in no mood to be impressed by the majesty of British law. He refused to budge. Lishman was sent to London, with peremptory instructions to see Fuchs, or else. The answer was "or else." When I heard that Lishman was back, I called at his office, a fairly grand, carpeted affair. Someone else was in his chair. Lishman himself I found a few doors further down the corridor, writing on the corner of a desk in a small room tenanted by four junior

<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert MacKenzie.—*Eds.*

agents. The poor devil was bloody and very bowed. He looked at me as if it had been my fault. Such was life under Hoover.

In the summer of 1950, I received a letter from Guy Burgess. "I have a shock for you," he began. "I have just been posted to Washington." He suggested that I should put him up for a few days until he had found a flat for himself. This posed a problem. In normal circumstances, it would have been quite wrong for two secret operatives to occupy the same premises. But the circumstances were not normal. From the earliest days, our careers had intertwined. He had collected money for me at Cambridge after the revolt of the Austrian Schiitzbund in February, 1934. I had put forward his name as a possible recruit for the Soviet service, a debt which he later repaid by smoothing my entry into the British secret service. In between, he had acted as courier for me in Spain. In 1940, we had worked closely together in SIS, and he had paid me a professional visit in Turkey in 1948. Our association was therefore well-known, and it was already certain that any serious investigation of either of us would reveal these past links. It seemed that there could be no real professional objection to him staying with me.

There was another consideration which inclined me towards agreeing with Burgess's suggestion. I knew from the files that his record was quite clean, in the sense that there was nothing recorded against him politically. But he was very apt to get into personal scrapes of a spectacular nature. A colleague in the

Foreign Office, now an Ambassador, had pushed him down the steps of the Gargoyle Club, injuring his skull. There had been trouble in Dublin and in Tangier. It occurred to me that he was much less likely to make himself conspicuous in my household than in a bachelor flat where every evening would find him footloose. I had scarcely replied to signify my agreement when Mackenzie showed me a letter he had received from Carey-Foster, then head of the Foreign Office security branch, warning him about Burgess's arrival. Carey-Foster explained that his eccentricities would be more easily overlooked in a large Embassy than in a small one. He gave a summary of his past peccadilloes, and said that worse might be in store. "What does he mean worse?" muttered Mackenzie. "Goats?" I told him I knew Guv well, that he would be staying with me, and that I would keep an eye on him. He seemed happy that there was someone else who was ready to share the responsibility.

In the light of what was to come, my decision to fall in with Burgess's suggestion looks like a bad mistake. I have indeed given it much thought in the past fifteen years. It will not do to plead that the twist events were to take a few months later were utterly unforeseeable; security precautions are designed to give protection from the unforeseeable. But, on reflection, I think that my decision to accommodate Burgess speeded by a few weeks at most the focussing of the spotlight on me. It also lent vigour to the letter which Bedell Smith sent the Chief insisting on my removal from the scene. It may even have been lucky that sus-

picion fell on me prematurely, in the sense that it crystallised before the evidence was strong enough to bring me to court.

Burgess's arrival raised an issue that I could not decide by myself. Should he or should he not be let into the secret of the British Embassy source which was still under investigation? The decision to initiate him was taken after I had made two lone motor trips to points outside Washington. I was told that the balance of opinion was that Guy's special knowledge of the problem might be helpful. I therefore took Guy fully into our confidence, briefing him in the greatest detail, and the subject remained under constant discussion between us. My difficulty was that I had only seen Maclean twice, and briefly, in fourteen years. I had no idea where he lived, how he lived, or indeed anything at all about his circumstances. But it is now time to turn to the case, to explain how it stood, and the problems involved.

The development of the affair was giving me deep anxiety. It was beset by imponderables, the assessment of which could be little better than guesswork. We had received some dozen reports referring to the source, who appeared in the documents under the code-name Homer, but little progress had been made towards identifying him. The FBI was still sending us reams about the Embassy charladies, and the enquiry into our menial personnel was spinning itself out endlessly. To me, this remains the most inexplicable feature of the whole affair. There was already evidence that the Foreign Office had been penetrated. Both Krivitsky and Volkov had said so. There was, of

course, nothing to suggest that the three sources referred to the same man. There is still no basis for that supposition. But if the assumption had been made, if in particular the Krivitsky material had been studied in relation to the Washington leak, a search among the diplomats would have started without loss of time—perhaps even before I appeared on the scene.

But another feature of the case was even more puzzling. I must confess to having enjoyed a great advantage in that I was pretty certain from the beginning who was involved. But, even discounting that advantage, it seemed to me quite obvious, from the nature of the reports, that we were not dealing with the petty agent emptying waste-paper baskets and snatching the odd carbon. Some of the reports dealt with political problems of some complexity, and on more than one occasion Homer was spoken of with respect. There could be no real doubt that we were dealing with a man of stature. The reluctance to initiate enquiries along these lines can only be attributed to a genuine mental block which stubbornly resisted the belief that respected members of the Establishment could do such things. The existence of such a block was amply borne out by the commentaries that followed the disappearance of Maclean and Burgess—and for that matter my own. Explanations of extraordinary silliness were offered in preference to the obvious simple truth.

Yet I knew quite well that this bizarre situation could not go on for ever. One day, any day, somebody in London or Washington would look into his shaving mirror and find inspiration there. Once investigation of the diplomats started, it would certainly yield

the right answer, sooner or later. The great question was: How soon? How late?

From discussion with my friends at meetings outside Washington, two main points emerged. First, it was essential to rescue Maclean before the net closed on him. That was accepted as an axiom. No question was raised about his future potential to the Soviet Union in the event of his escape. It was quite enough that he was an old comrade. Some readers, prisoners of prejudice, may find this hard to swallow. I do not ask them to do so. But they cannot blame me if they suffer unpleasant shocks in future cases. Second, it was desirable that Maclean should stay in his post as long as possible. After his departure, it was said blandly that he was "only" head of the American Department of the Foreign Office, and thus had little access to high-grade information. But it is nonsense to suppose that a resolute and experienced operator occupying a senior post in the Foreign Office can have access only to the papers that are placed on his desk in the ordinary course of duty. I have already shown that I gained access to the files of British agents in the Soviet Union when I was supposed to be chivvying Germans in Spain. In short, our duty was to get Maclean to safety, but not before it was necessary.

But there were two further complications. I had been sent to the United States for a two-year tour of duty, and I could therefore expect to be replaced in the autumn of 1951. I had no idea what my next posting would be; it could easily have been Cairo or Singapore, far out of touch with the Maclean case. Groping in partial darkness as we were, it seemed

safest to get Maclean away by the middle of 1951 at the latest. The second complication arose from Burgess's position. He was emphatically not at home in the Foreign Office, for which he had neither the right temperament nor the right personality. He had been dunking for some time of getting out, and had one or two irons in the fire in Fleet Street. As a result, his work for the Foreign Office had suffered, so much so that it looked like a close thing between resignation and dismissal. In any case, he was anxious to get back to England.

In somebody's mind—I do not know whose—the two ideas merged: Burgess's return to London and the rescue of Maclean. If Burgess returned to London from the British Embassy in Washington, it seemed natural that he should call on the head of the American Department. He would be well placed to set the ball rolling for the rescue operation. It would have been possible for him to have resigned in Washington, and returned to London without fuss. But it might have looked a bit odd if he had gone back voluntarily shortly before the disappearance of Maclean. Matters had to be so arranged that he was sent back, willy-nilly. It was the sort of project in which Burgess delighted, and he brought it off in the simplest possible way. Three times in one day he was booked for speeding in the state of Virginia, and the Governor reacted just as we had hoped. He sent a furious protest to the

ate Department against this flagrant abuse of diplomatic privilege, which was then brought to the attention of the Ambassador. Within a few days, Burgess  
 " " g "ully informed that he would have to leave.

As soon as the possibility of Burgess helping in the rescue operation emerged from our discussions, great attention was paid to my own position. Despite all precautions, Burgess might be seen with Maclean, and enquiry into his activity might lead to doubts about me. There seemed very little that could be done about it, but it occurred to me that I could help to divert suspicion by making a positive contribution to the solution of the British Embassy case. Hitherto, I had lain low, letting the FBI and MI5 do what they could. Now that the rescue plan was taking shape, there was no reason why I should not give the investigation a nudge in the right direction.

To that end, I wrote a memorandum to Head Office, suggesting that we might be wasting our time in exhaustive investigations of the Embassy menials. I recalled the statements of Krivitsky to the best of my ability from memory. He had said that the head of the Soviet intelligence for Western Europe had recruited in the middle thirties a young man who had gone into the Foreign Office. He was of good family, and had been educated at Eton and Oxford. He was an idealist, working without payment. I suggested that these data, such as they were, should be matched against the records of diplomats stationed in Washington between the relevant dates in 1944-45 of the known leakages. I received a reply from Vivian, assuring me that that aspect of the case had been very much "in their minds." But there was no evidence on file that anything had been done about it, and the speed, the disconcerting speed, of later developments suggested that the idea must have been relatively new.

A match of the Krivitsky material with the reports of the Embassy leakage yielded a short list of perhaps six names which was sent to us by London, with the comment that intensive enquiries were in progress. The list included the names of Roger Makins, Paul Gore-Booth, Michael Wright and Donald Maclean. (It may be objected that Maclean was not at either Eton or Oxford. He was not. But MI5 did not attach too much weight to that detail, on the ground that foreigners often assume that all well-born young Englishmen must go to Eton and Oxford.) The list provided Bobby Mackenzie with one of his finest hours. He offered me short odds on Gore-Booth. Why? He had been educated at Eton and Oxford; he had entered the Foreign Office in the middle thirties; he was a classical scholar of distinction to whom the code-name Homer would be appropriate; Homer, in its Russian form of Gomer, was a near-anagram of Gore; as for ideals, Gore-Booth was a Christian Scientist and a teetotaller. What more could I want? It was a neat bit of work, good enough, I hoped, to give London pause for a few days.

Burgess packed up and left. We dined together his last evening in a Chinese restaurant where each booth had "personalised music" which helped to drown our voices. We went over the plan step by step. He was to meet a Soviet contact on arrival in London, and give him a full briefing. He was then to call on Maclean at his office armed with a sheet of paper giving the time and place of rendez-vous which he would slip across the desk. He would then meet Maclean and put him "in the picture." From then on, the matter was out



of my hands. Burgess did not look too happy, and I must have had an inkling of what was on his mind. When I drove him to the station next morning, my last words, spoken only half-jocularly, were: "Don't you go too."

MI5 were not particularly impressed by Mackenzie's brainwave about Gore-Booth. Confronted by their short list, they were looking for the odd man out, the man who conformed least to pattern. It was intelligent procedure, and it led them to put Maclean at the top of the list. He had never enjoyed the social round of the diplomatic corps. He had preferred the society of independent minds. By contrast, the others on the list were depressingly conformist. In communicating to us their conclusions, MI5 informed us that Maclean would probably be approached when the case against him was complete. Meanwhile, certain categories of Foreign Office paper would be withheld from him, and his movements would be put under surveillance. These last two decisions, taken presumably to soothe the Americans, were foolish. But I saw no reason to challenge them. I judged that they might serve me in good stead if anything went wrong. I was quite right.

I was nevertheless alarmed by the speed with which the affair was developing, and at the next meeting with my Soviet contact told him of the pressing need for haste. I was also given a pretext for writing to Burgess direct. The Embassy transport officer had twice asked me what was to be done about the Lincoln Continental which he had left in the car park. So I wrote to Burgess in pressing terms, telling him that

if he did not act at once, it would be too late—because I would send his car to the scrap-heap. There was nothing more I could do.

One morning, at a horribly early hour, Geoffrey Paterson called me by telephone. He explained that he had just received an enormously long Most Immediate telegram from London. It would take him all day to decypher without help, and he had just sent his secretary on a week's leave. Could he borrow mine? I made the necessary arrangements and sat back to compose myself. This was almost certainly it. Was Maclean in the bag? Had Maclean got away? I was itching to rush round to the Embassy and lend a third hand to the telegram. But it was clearly wiser to stick to my usual routine as if nothing had happened. When I reached the Embassy, I went straight to Paterson's office. He looked grey. "Kim," he said in a half-whisper, "the bird has flown." I registered dawning horror (I hope). "What bird? Not Maclean?" "Yes," he answered. "But there's worse than that. . . . *Guy Burgess* has gone with him." At that, my consternation was no pretence.