

by Anne McElvoy

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woman with a broad smile pushes a bicycle along a quiet lane deep in the Oxfordshire countryside. With her is a nervous-looking man with intense brown eyes. Passers-by notice the couple holding hands.

Yet far from being innocent star-crossed lovers, they are two of the Cold War's most important spies, serving Statin's military intelly, see rying Statin's military intelly. N A hot summer's day in wartime, a dapper young

The 'romance' is a cover for controller and agent.

The woman is Sonya, the code name of Ursula Kuczynski, of the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) - a German-born illegal living undercover with her British-born husband Len, also a Soviet spy. She sends secrets back to Moscow with the help of a specially adapted washing line. The man is Klaus Fuchs, also a German immigrant He is a gifted physicist, working on the Tube Alloys project.

At the heart of it is the manufacture of pure uranium_235. Tube Alloys would go on to become the basis of the Manhattan Project in Los Alamos, New Mexico, which developed the first nuclear weapon. Its betrayal by Fuchs gave Moscow a leap forward worth at least two years in its nuclear morranme.

clear programme.
Interial unearthed from
naterial unearthed from
at East German files conata both before and after
many of Britain's nuclear
were betrayed by Fuchs,
syra as his controller,
still for the reputation
ain's security services,

shoe-shining service and commu-nal balconies. Long dinners were cooked by a celebrity chef. Prominent arrists including Piet Mondrian, Ben Nicholson and Henry Moore gathered in the trasement Isobar restaurant.

basement Isobar restaurant
Had communism ever amounted
to more than misery in practice,
it would have looked a lot like
the carefree life of the Isokon – a
fact reflected in a good deal of
the high-minded conversation
of those who gathered there. For
as the recently opened MI5 files
make clear, the falts attracted not
just communist intellectuals, but
coviet sevents

just communist intellectuals, but Soviet agents. In the period between the end of the 1930s and 1930, more than 20 agents and informers were

recently opened files reveal that MIS had been alerted to the dangers posed by Sonya and her brother Jurgen, but failed to act. Taking centre place in the conspiracy was the Isokon – a fashionable, white modernist building in Hampstead, North London, also known as the Lawn Road flats. It is still impressive – a large ocean liner erected among the Victorian terraces as a failed to act danger but Residence there brought libera-tion from 'tiresome domestic tasks', with an on-site restaurant, about the Victorian terraces a pian design' for a r ration of idealists. MI5 was told

living in or visiting the building. The story begins with the arrival in London of Jurgen Kuzynski in 1933. A brilliant economic statistician in his late 20s, he was an exister of the common of the common of the common of the story of the story of the solon. A common of the story of the solon of the story of the solon of the story of the solon. David Burke, a Cambridge historian who has accessed Soviet files, is in no doubt that Kuzynski arrived in Britain with a mission to establish network; And in this, he was ably assisted by his sister Ursula, codenamed Sonya tradecraft handling explosives and working undercover in Manchuria. Now she was closer to hand. She moved to Oxford, near the atomic energy research establishment at Harwell, later setting in the idylic village of Great Rollright, near Russian archives confirm that it was Kuczynski who introduced Puchs to his sister.

walls, or she would receive coded information marked in magazines, which he would toss over Harwell's which was a reports were radioed in by way of an elaborate wireless contraption concealed in the washing line in her garden.

Intriguingly, we have unearthed a report from archives showing that Oxford City Police picked up signs of wireless activity - strictly forbidden in wartime - in 1943 and contacted MJS. The most interesting point appears to be their possession of a large wireless set and you may think this worthy of further enquiry, the police wrote. No such enquiry ensued.

Neither did MJS pay heed to separate warnings by a woman called Milicent Bagot, the strait-laced model for John le Carré's Soviet-ologist Comie Sachs in his novels. Milicent beavered away thank lessly from the late 1930 in MJS's counter-intelligence department and she did not much take to Jurgen Kuczynski, who was well-known

in the Jabour Party and in London social life. I really do feel strongly that something ought to be done about this man, site recorded in a note to her superiors.

When this fell on deaf ears, she tried again: We have a great deal of information about this man, indicating that he is taking an active part in British intelligence. When friends in high places pressed for Kuczynski's release from internment at the outbreak of the Second World War, Milicent was enraged, again writing: When a series and the site of information about this man, indicating that he is taking an active part in antiberist hypopagnida. But we are finding some difficulty convincing the Home Office.

Silly social skills and protection from powerful friends ensured Jurgen was always one step ahead of being found out. Only in 1947, after the defection of fellow Soriet agent alexander Foote, did the secret services finally interview Sonya.

far left, Iwed near the village of Little Rollingth, above, Centre. The Isokon building was home to Soviet agents, while Agatha Chnistle, left, also lived there when she wrote a spy novel

the 1944 to 1946 working with the American Atomic the Research department in Loss Alamos.

By the time he returned to Britain, he was a marked man Arrested at the end of 1949, he was put on trial in January 1950 and served nine years in January 1950 and served nine years in prison, before heing allowed to emigrate to East Berlin.

A day before his trial, A day before this trial, Jurgen did the same.

In a sombre statement to the House of Commons, Prime Minister Clement Attlee described the Fuchs affair as 'a most deplorable and unfortunate incident,' but added that there was

enemy thinks the capitalist You have to know what

rino evidence to suggest any wrongdoing on the part of MIS.

It was a very British way of
describing an outright failure by
the security services. The consequences of their betrayal would
resonate across the world.

Catching up with America's bomb
capability gave Stalin the confidence to become involved in the
dence to the come involved in the
dence and was a service of the
total missile crisis.

In 1990, I was one of the first

ournalists to speak to Sonya – now known as Ruth Werner, the fifth known as Ruth Werner, the fifth known name of her extraordinary covert career - in East Berlin.

Fiercely intelligent, she was intolerant when she thought questions strayed too close to old scerets.

You come and smear honey in my mouth, she once chield me in an old German saying, adding: 'And what you want is more information.' On more threadly days, we would chat over tea and home-made cake in her kitchen (her tea-towel bearing the motto 'Workers Of The World Unite').

When historic Soviet military

When historic soviet military intelligence documents began to leak out in the early 200s, it became clear that Sonya had not disclosed anything like the full range of her work as a controller of British agents.

We now know that she was also the controller of Melita Norwood, the longest-serving British spy for the Soviets, whose betrayal was only unearthed in 1999. She was dubbed the spy who came in from the Co-op.

One of the strangest twists in the Isokon tale is provided, appropriately enough, by crime novelist Agatha Christie, who lived at the Lawn Road flats between 1941 and 1948.

It was there that she wrote her spy novel, Nor MJ, featuring German-lewish Markist refugees and the penetration of British intelligence by hostile services.

Half a century later, I sought out Jurgen Kuczynski in East Berlin Sifting in his vast library, he joked that he had The Economist magazine delivered by special permission, because you have to know what the capitalist enemy is thinking.

He still enjoyed Agatha Christie novels, he noted with a trailler in ever know who the murderer is.

Anne McElvoy is senior editor at The Economist. Her documentary, Knowing Jurgen Kuczynski, is on Radio 4 on Tuesday at 4pm.