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## THE CHURCH CONNECTION

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# The Anglican-Orthodox network in the Mideast

The truth about Soviet involvement in projects for Mideast disorder, such as the one to which Anwar Sadat fell victim, is to be found in the history and present phase of relations between the Anglican and Russian Orthodox Churches.

There was, of course, a note of *Schadenfreude*, or malicious glee, in official Soviet commentaries on the demise of the Egyptian President, who only weeks before had given the Russian ambassador and all his staff one-way tickets out of the country, accusing them of complicity in unrest.

But amid Moscow's cheerleading for Sadat's opposition, the alert eye could discern a clue to what more basic forces were at work behind these diplomatic skirmishes: it came from Igor Belyayev, a Beirut-based Soviet Orientologist with intelligence connections, who writes for the weekly *Literaturnaya Gazeta*. On Sept. 23, in a review of Egyptian developments, Belyayev noted that Sadat had ordered the arrest of several dozen Muslim leaders and Copts. The Copts, he added in a casual aside, adhere to a religion "close to Orthodoxy."

The uses of the Orthodox Church and the Copts for certain KGB purposes have achieved some popular notoriety of late, thanks to the memoir of Soviet defector V. N. Sakharov, published under the title of *High Treason*. Among other reports on Soviet intelligence endeavors in Egypt a decade ago, Sakharov asserts that the priest in charge of the Russian Orthodox Church in Alexandria, Egypt, was a lieutenant colonel in the KGB, who maintained steady contact with Coptic leaders in Egypt and in Ethiopia. Any investigation of religious fundamentalist fanatics, and assassins, will cross paths with such cassocked agents and friends of the KGB. This is as true in Egypt as it has been in Iran.

### The Queen's household

Pursuing the lines of control behind these soldiers in the field, one lands in the Queen of England's household and the inner councils of the Anglican Church. The relevant Russian power center is a faction in the Soviet party and intelligence services that is the fruit of two centuries of British investment in creating a capability inside Russia, in order to wield Russian might on behalf of British imperial policy.

It may efficiently be called the "Philby" faction, after the British intelligence officer H. A. R. "Kim" Philby, who ran to Moscow in 1963 as a "double-agent," while remaining British to the core, and who specializes in Near East affairs. The more shadowy figure who shepherded young men of Philby's 1930s Cambridge set into place for such double service was Anthony Blunt, knight in charge of the Queen's picture collection until his Russian connection was exposed during a feud in the British elite in 1979.

The Anglican Church liaison with the extensively KGB-interpenetrated Russian Orthodox Church is in the hands of officials equally intimate with the royal household and head of the Anglicans, the Archbishop of Canterbury. It is a little-known group called The Archbishop of Canterbury's Counsellors on Foreign Relations that conceives and executes Anglican policies through the World Council of Churches. The late Canon Herbert Waddams, godfather of the Counsellors' predecessor organization, the Church of England Council on Foreign Relations, and a man who proclaimed "progress for mankind" obsolete, took charge of reactivating Anglican diplomacy with the wing of the Russian Orthodox Church functioning inside the Soviet Union, during the late 1940s and 1950s.

### Gibraltar: gateway to the Mideast

The Anglican-Orthodox nexus proceeds from well before the Soviet period, as Waddams was fond of boasting. In the last quarter of the 19th century, the Archbishop of Canterbury's agent W. J. Birkbeck engaged in copious correspondence with members of the Russian court faction opposed to the nationalist industrializers led by Count Sergei Witte. Among Birkbeck's contacts was the Procurator of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, with whom he plotted for union of the Russian and Anglican Churches and for factionalizing of the Vatican—another precedent most instructive for understanding today's threat of schisms in the Roman Catholic Church:

These 19th-century self-styled ecumenicists, with their allies like Bishop Nathan Soederblom of Sweden, whom Waddams revered, set the machinery in motion for the eventual formation of the World Council of Churches in this country.

The Middle East is prime terrain for the Anglicans and the Orthodox, as it is for Kim Philby and was for his father St. John Philby, the British intelligence Arabist who midwifed the birth of the Muslim Brotherhood. Waddams, in a 1957 lecture in praise of two centuries of Anglican foreign policy, identified the Bishopric of Gibraltar, the British rock at the mouth of the Mediterranean Sea, as the bridgehead for Anglican collaboration with the Orthodox churches—in the 1850s and also today.