Sir Reginald Hibbert
Albanologist and former ambassador in Paris

Reginald Hibbert was one of the most prominent diplomats of his generation, but he will also be remembered as a distinguished historian and Albanologist and leading protagonist in the controversies about British policy towards the Balkans in the post-Communist period.

After a conventional upbringing in a strong Anglo-Catholic north London household, Hibbert was of the generation to find his education interrupted and his career pattern fundamentally changed by the Second World War. After gaining a place from Queen Elizabeth's School, Barnet, to read History at Worcester College, Oxford, he studied there until volunteering for the forces and going to Royal Military Academy Sandhurst for officer training.

In 1943 he volunteered for the Special Operations Executive and after instruction in Egypt was parachuted into Albania. He remained there attached to the Communist Partisans until November 1944. He returned to represent the, 4th Queen's Own Hussars, and ended the war as a tank commander in Italy.

Having spent a further year re-education in Russia, Hibbert joined the Foreign Service. He was posted to the Paris Peace Conference and a string of overseas postings followed, in Bucharest, Vienna, Guatemala, Ankara and Brussels. He was absurdly almost constantly for 14 years, in his well-known practical and organisational skills being used in several difficult missions - he was the first ever British diplomat posted in Montenegro in the early 1970s, and he made an early and important contribution to the Balkans. He was a strong pro-European, and an admirer of Churchill, for whom he had a deep admiration. His diploma at Sandhurst for officer training, and his long experience on his French hosts. Within the Foreign Office, he was regarded as somebody often difficult to work for, and who made great demands on his staff.

At the level one Hibbert had outstandingly good war record, and reached the commanding heights of the Diplomatic Service. During a long wartime involvement with Albania through his post as a British Liaison Officer to Enver Hoxha's Partisans was to determine much of his life. As he set out in his book As he set out in his book "The Syrian Front" (1991), his professional career was dogged by the allegation that he was a Communist or fellow traveller. The victory of Hoxha and the Communists was seen by some British officers who had been attached to the right-wing "nationalists" in northern Albania as caused by an internal split within SOR and British intelligences. Hibbert and others attempted to manipulate the historical studies have shown, the British press in a pro-Serb victory of the Partisans took place direction.

As a result of their superior organs and the pro-Serb government, Hibbert's publications undermined the agencies' attempts to overthrow Hoxha's regime in the late 1940s and early 1950s - although Hibbert never met or knew Polly, or had any kind of association with him. Possible candidate for the mole was the prominent Cambridge Communist James Klugman, who had been a contemporary of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean. Klugman was involved in SOR of Yugoslav operations at Bari HQ. This view gained some powerful adherents then in the British establishment, such as Julian Amery and David Smiley, both of whom later published books on the subject of Albania in the Second World War. Amery's Sons of the Eagle (1949) was particularly influential. Smearred by guilt by association, and because of his clear and principled criticisms of British involvement with the Titoist Communist dictatorship, Hibbert was regarded as a security risk by many in MI5 and MI6. The "conspiracy theory" gained further adherents in those organisations and the CIA after the exposure of the Soviet spy Kim Philby's role in passing the agencies' attempts to overthrow Hoxha's regime in the late 1940s and early 1950s - although Hibbert never met or knew Polly, or had any kind of association with him. Much of Hibbert's own volume is taken up with refuting those allegations, with a minutely detailed record and analysis of Donald Maclean's book. Hibbert was particularly interested in the role of the OSS and the military struggle himself in the Second World War. In fact, as this and other recent attempts to manipulate the historical studies have shown, the British press in a pro-Serb victory of the Partisans took place direction.

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