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RODERICK BAILEY 

The Trials of Ormond Uren: A Study in Security and Spy Mania

Abstract: In 1943, Ormond Uren, an army officer employed in the London headquarters of Britain's Special Operations Executive, was court-martialed and imprisoned after disclosing secret information to a senior member of the Communist Party of Great Britain. The episode has become a staple of writers interested in tales of espionage and questions of loyalty, with Uren's actions routinely presented as those of a spy and traitor. Drawing on MI5 records and other sources, this article argues that those routine images lack convincing evidence to support them; but it also demonstrates that the case retains importance as an example of the risks that secret organizations run when employees' loyalties lie elsewhere.

On the evening of Sunday, 7 November 1943, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Perfect, an MI5 representative in Scotland, visited the Edinburgh home of Mrs. Myrtle Uren. Perfect had instructions to pass along news of the recent in-camera court-martial of her son, a twenty-four-year-old British Army

Roderick Bailey is a Research Fellow in History at the University of Oxford. His past work includes monographs on the activities in Albania and Fascist Italy of Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE), a study of SOE's recruitment of the British communist James Klugmann, and a major research project, funded by the Wellcome Trust, on the psychological selection and psychiatric treatment of SOE personnel. The author can be contacted at roderick.bailey@history.ox.ac.uk

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captain. Ormond Uren's offense, so Perfect had learned from MI5 in London, was that he had committed a breach of the Official Secrets Act by communicating, to a member of the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), secret information derived from his duties; the court had sentenced him to be cashiered (i.e., ritually dismissed from the army) and imprisoned for seven years, and he was now in Wormwood Scrubs, where his family could write to him. "Among lots of things she said, one struck me rather," reported Perfect after breaking the news, "and that was why it was that people like Oswald Mosley, who were known traitors, and who lived in prison with their wife and family, had not been shot, while her son, guilty as he may have been for passing on information [that] he had no right to [share], certainly was no proper traitor like Mosley."¹

Ormond Uren's story has long been a staple of journalists and historians interested in tales of espionage, betrayals, treason, and troubling loyalty. Its heyday was the 1980s and 1990s, when, against a background of Cold War stories of spies and spy hunting, multiple writers revived and represented it as an early and meaningful instance of Soviet penetration of Britain's secret services. Uren can be found variously accused of being a "Soviet spy" (Nigel West), "Soviet agent" (Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky), "overt" CPGB member (West), "secret" CPGB member (Stephen Dorril), and "G.R.U. agent" (Chapman Pincher) who was "charged with espionage" (John Cairncross)/"imprisoned for passing SOE's secrets to the Soviets" (West)/"sent to jail" for "Soviet espionage" (Andrew and Gordievsky)/"sent to prison for passing information to the Russians" (Leo Marks)/guilty of "treachery" (Pincher).² Statements were made that he was a Cambridge graduate (Andrew Sinclair) and connected to the Cambridge spy ring (West).³ Some described the circumstances as an important moment—"a warning jolt"—that alerted various British authorities, from the prime minister down, to the potential risks posed by British communists employed in secret wartime work.⁴

Drawing extensively on contemporary documentation, from Uren's five-volume MI5 file, declassified in 2019, to the proceedings of his court-martial and the records of Britain's Special Operations Executive (SOE), the organization for which he had worked and whose "secret information" he was held to have disclosed, this is the first study dedicated exclusively to the case. Its principal aim is to sharpen understanding of the episode's details and significance. Specifically, it seeks to clarify three elements that commonly shape claims about it: Uren's reasons for disclosing secret information; the substance of that information; and the significance of his disclosures. The article argues that an absence of convincing evidence undermines many postwar claims about Uren's motives, intentions, and actions. But it also argues that the case remains a powerful illustration of the potential hazards

of employing individuals whose commitments and loyalties extend beyond those of the organizations for which they work. First, though, the article demonstrates how inconsistency and a paucity of evidence are hallmarks of postwar accounts of what took place.

IMPRESSIONS OF THE ORMOND UREN CASE SINCE 1943

The British government's single official and public declaration about Ormond Uren's offense was a War Office announcement issued to the press on the day that Peter Perfect visited Uren's mother. Its essentials, which national newspapers carried across the country the next day, would remain for decades the only details publicly accessible to anyone interested in the case. It was not long before writers began to depart from what the War Office had reported. But few new claims were accompanied by much evidence or pointed to where corroboration might be found, and none have provided a cast-iron case for disputing Uren's later insistence that the reality was different—and his offense less significant—than others seemed to believe.

According to that War Office announcement, Uren was a British army officer who had joined the Army in 1939, been commissioned in 1940, and seen service in an infantry unit until posted to "special duties" in May 1942; he had then been tried by court-martial on 21 October 1943 and found guilty of committing an offense contrary to the Official Secrets Act. The particulars of the charge, the announcement stated, were that, between April and September 1943, and "for a purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the State," Uren had communicated to Douglas Frank Springhall, national organizer and member of the CPGB's Central Committee, "information of a highly secret character which he had acquired in the course of his official duties, and which was calculated to be or might be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy." Uren's explanation for his actions, according to statements by him that were produced in court, was that he had been "attracted by the activities of the Communist Party" and was put in touch with Springhall after expressing to a friend "regret" that he was "isolated from the opportunity of co-operating or doing anything practical to give concrete expression to his sympathy with the Party's aims." "I disclosed the information to Springhall to show that I had complete faith in him and that he could have complete trust in me as a sincere believer in Communism," Uren was quoted as telling the court. Although vague on precise details, the announcement explained that Uren admitted to disclosing to Springhall, at the latter's request and over the course of "several meetings," "a written report of his life history, education and political and social background" and "a written description of the lay-out of the establishment in which he was working." Springhall had also questioned him about "various aspects of his work" and "future military operations," although, the announcement added,

Uren was “not in a position” to share information about the latter. Uren’s sentence was noted, as was the fact that Springhall, too, was now serving seven years after being sentenced in July under the Official Secrets Act in connection with obtaining secret information from another source.⁵

It took fewer than twenty-four hours for some of those details to be misreported. Newspapers generally acknowledged the source but not all reproduced it accurately. The *Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*, *Scotsman*, and *Daily Telegraph* were among those that repeated the announcement almost word for word.⁶ The *Manchester Guardian*, *Times*, and *News Chronicle* neglected to mention that Uren had given Springhall “a written report of his life history, education, and political and social background.”⁷ The *Daily Mirror* claimed incorrectly that Uren had disclosed “military” secrets.⁸ The *Daily Worker*, the CPGB’s newspaper, omitted all reference to communism or the party and confined itself to stating that Uren had been charged with contravening the Official Secrets Act by communicating, to a certain “D.F. Springhall,” highly secret information acquired in the course of his official duties.”⁹

Such errors and omissions were minor departures from the War Office’s announcement compared to others that came later. John Baker White’s *The Soviet Spy System*, a 1948 account of recent trials of suspected communist spies in Canada, was the first postwar book to mention Uren’s case, which Baker White presented as a “chapter” in Douglas Springhall’s comparable efforts to acquire “secret information” in Britain. At close to two pages, Baker White’s description remains one of the longest in print; it is also remarkable for the fact that he limited his claims and evidence to a faithful reproduction of the official announcement of 7 November 1943.¹⁰ By contrast, the next published account to mention the case in any depth, Francis Noel-Baker’s *The Spy Web: A Study of Communist Espionage*, published in 1954, advanced Uren to the status of “Russian spy” and stated that “the highly secret information” given to Springhall ended up with “agents of the Soviet Government in London.”¹¹ Noel-Baker, who was writing books while seeking reelection as a Labour Member of Parliament, provided no evidence for this, confining himself to a few details, including Uren’s quoted words, taken unacknowledged from the War Office’s announcement. Portrayals of Uren’s story in the 1960s and 1970s were not much different. Journalist John Bulloch’s *Akin to Treason*, published in 1966, has the “traitor” Uren “consciously taking the step across the border into treachery” after Springhall asked him for details of the work he was doing.¹² In 1972, Richard Deacon has Uren disclosing information “calculated to be useful to an enemy.”¹³ For Andrew Boyle, Uren “gladly” passed “secret military plans” to “his friend” Douglas Springhall.¹⁴ All of these statements went beyond the War Office’s announcement. None produced evidence to justify doing so.

A gearshift in the episode's historiography occurred in 1981–1982. This began with the publication of Nigel West's *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909–1945*. The book was its author's first solo foray into intelligence history, and it included details about Uren's case that went beyond anything published until then:

[Uren] was a twenty-four-year-old Cambridge linguist ... who had joined the Hungarian section of SOE in May 1942, transferring from the Highland Light Infantry. He was fluent in Hungarian, and had been selected for a blind drop into Hungary by his SOE Commanding Officer, Colonel Perkins. Between May 1942 and his detention on 24 September 1943, Uren had lived in an SOE safe house in Dorset Square, and had worked in Norgeby House, the SOE Headquarters in Baker Street. He had constant access to all the Eastern European country sections, which were housed in the same building, and was on close terms with many of the senior SOE personnel.

West's account was the first in print to link Uren to SOE. It was also the first to make claims about his age, Cambridge connection, language skills, mooted mission to Hungary, commanding officer, digs, workplace, and "access" and relationship to colleagues. New, too, were West's additional claims that Uren had first met Springhall on 9 April 1943 off London's Charing Cross Road; that they had met five times in total, "all in the area of St Martin's Lane and the Tottenham Court Road"; and that during these meetings Uren had given to Springhall "a substantial amount of intelligence." According to West, that intelligence included "secret SOE communications information," "details of SOE policy in the Balkans, Poland, and Czechoslovakia," and even "a floor-plan of Norgeby House." West claimed, too, that Uren was Springhall's source for a statement that the British government "intended to cheat their Russian allies and prevent important strategic information from reaching Stalin."¹⁵ Written for a popular audience, West's book was virtually footnote-free and provided no pointers as to how his claims about Uren could be checked. Only in subsequent comments in the press did he gesture toward some sources: a statement by Uren produced at his court-martial; Uren's "SOE file"; and Uren's "former commanding officer, the head of the Hungarian Section of SOE," who, apparently, "shared" West's view of the case's "undeniable significance."¹⁶

None of those sources were readily accessible to other researchers. The War Office proceedings of Uren's court-martial would be released to the National Archives (then the Public Record Office) only in 1996.¹⁷ His MI5 file, which contains a copy of the proceedings, took another twenty-three years to appear. His SOE file has never been released, while H.B. Perkins, Uren's "commanding officer," had been dead since 1965.¹⁸ Nor did West's claims go unchallenged. Indeed, they provoked Uren, who was then sixty-two

and living in London, into making his first public statements about the case. The immediate spark was an article in *The Observer* in November 1981 in which West asserted that the “Cambridge-educated” Uren had been connected to “the Cambridge-oriented spy ring” of which Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, Donald Maclean, John Cairncross, and Anthony Blunt had been infamously part, and that the “SOE secrets” given to Springhall had been “routed to Moscow.” Thus, claimed West, “MI5 had stumbled over the Cambridge ring” when, in 1943, Springhall and Uren attracted its attention. “Unfortunately, MI5 overlooked the significance of Springhall’s frequent visits to Cambridge. ... Nor, for that matter, did anyone inquire into Uren’s Cambridge background.”¹⁹ Uren reacted with a piece of his own in *The Times*, printed two days later, in which he argued that West’s article contained serious errors. He also offered his own account, which began by confirming several of the details found in West’s. The “bald facts,” wrote Uren, were these: “[I]n 1943 I was a 23-year-old officer in the Highland Light Infantry working in London in the Special Operations Executive. I committed a breach of the Official Secrets Act by communicating secret information on two occasions, to the best of my recollection, to Douglas Springhall, who was the National Organizer [*sic*] of the Communist Party of Great Britain.” He did not dispute the grounds for that conviction: “I do not wish to justify myself or minimize the importance of what I did. Whatever my motives, I committed a serious offence and can hardly complain at being punished.” But he considered it “grossly unfair” for West to blur his case with that of Philby et al. For one thing, Cambridge and its spies were red herrings, Uren argued. He had studied at Edinburgh University (“It would have been better if Mr West had investigated my ‘Cambridge background’ before writing his article”) and only engaged with communism once the war was underway and after he had joined the army and been commissioned: “I was extremely depressed about the state of the world and, reading some communist literature while in this state of mind, I ‘saw’ with the force of a blinding illumination that communism was the only solution to the world’s problems.” As for how he came to divulge secrets to Springhall, here, too, Uren drew distinctions between his own motives and actions and those of career spies like Philby. Uren explained that he had asked communist friends in Edinburgh about how, given the restricted abilities of a British Army officer, he might become involved with the Communist Party. Someone arranged for him to meet Springhall—“I was told that [he was] the person responsible for organizing people like myself”—and this duly occurred at a restaurant (the Pop-Inn) on London’s Charing Cross Road. “I told him I was very keen to be considered a member of the party and to work for it. I also told him about the sort of work I was doing and my department.” Springhall told him to put it in writing. They fixed another

time to meet and duly met again. "These are the only times I recall meeting Springhall and they were certainly the only times that any important information passed between us. ... My impression is that at this stage he was more concerned with 'establishing my credentials' than with anything else." News of Springhall's subsequent arrest and conviction for obtaining secrets from elsewhere caused Uren to feel "extremely frightened." As the months passed and life remained quiet, he began to feel "more and more relieved" and hoped that he could consider the episode "closed." Then he was summoned to see SOE's security officer and confronted about his contact with Springhall. "It never occurred to me to do anything but confess to the whole thing. After the tension I had been living under for the past months it was also a tremendous relief."²⁰

In subsequent weeks, in *The Times* and *The Listener* (the latter a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) weekly magazine), West and Uren exchanged further views, with little in the way of shared opinion and some degree of friction. Uren held to his version of events. West, who described Uren's *Times* article as "a rather incomplete account of his wartime espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union," made further claims.²¹ These included his description of Uren as an agent of the Soviet NKVD, a forerunner of the KGB, whose disclosures to the Soviet Union were so significant that they had directly assisted the Red Army's ability to advance westward into Europe. Responding to a recent piece in *The Listener* about Anthony Blunt and Kim Philby, West named Uren as one of two men who had "surfaced" in recent weeks "to explain their wartime espionage for the Russians": the other was Leo Long, whose post in British military intelligence enabled him "to pass details of German troop strengths to Moscow." Uren had been "convicted in 1943 of betraying secrets to the Russians which were similarly relevant to the Red Army," West wrote, adding that both men were "NKVD agents" inside the British secret services and "able to assist in changing the map of Europe": "Whilst Philby and Blunt held primarily counter-intelligence jobs during the war, Long and Uren were able to supply the Russians with information which had a direct operational significance and were therefore better able to assist the Red Army to push westwards."²² "No doubt the significance of such offences would have been lessened if the Red Army had retired to the Soviet Union after Germany's surrender," West wrote in a follow-up, responding to correspondents who had noted that the Soviet Union had been an ally at that time, "but as it failed to do so the wartime Soviet agents [i.e., Long and Uren] inevitably share a part of the blame for the consequent mere substitution of oppression."²³ For his part, Uren accused West of "a cavalier disregard for facts." What he had disclosed was what Springhall had requested: "an outline of the work I was doing in SOE. This naturally involved describing the work of the department in which I was employed and the function of SOE as a

whole.” SOE’s existence was “highly secret at the time” and his offense “a serious one,” Uren repeated, “but hardly of a nature to change the map of Europe. ... West has got it wrong. If his jigsaw requires someone in SOE or elsewhere passing important high-level operational information to the Russians in 1943, he had better keep on looking.”²⁴

West was unmoved by Uren’s objections and, in subsequent books, repeated his claims. *Molehunt* describes Uren as one of Douglas Springhall’s “sub-agents” and “convicted of espionage.”²⁵ *Secret War* presents Uren as “a Soviet spy” in SOE, one of several “known to be influencing events behind the scenes,” who was “discovered passing SOE’s secrets from the Hungarian subsection to the Russians.”²⁶ Uren was “imprisoned for passing SOE’s secrets to the Soviets,” contends *Counterfeit Spies*, which also describes the case as illustrating “the attentions of hostile intelligence agencies.”²⁷ *Venona* has Uren passing “classified papers” to Springhall and as a member of the latter’s “GRU [Soviet foreign intelligence] ring.”²⁸ *Mask* repeats the charge that Uren passed along “a floor-plan of Norgeby House” and revealed details of British policy in Yugoslavia, Poland and Czechoslovakia.²⁹ A 2019 reissue of West’s *MI5* does the same.³⁰ In 2018, in a commentary to *Churchill’s Spy Files*, a collection of recently declassified wartime MI5 reports, West noted and quoted a new source, an MI5 summary of the case, albeit one that said nothing about spying or the Soviet Union or, indeed, anything contradictory to Uren’s own claims. The summary was chiefly concerned with explaining how scrutiny of Springhall’s diary had led eventually to Uren’s discovery; but it also recorded Uren’s explanation, after his arrest, for how and why he had come to be in touch with Springhall (“he [i.e., Uren] was filled with admiration for the Communist Party and openly expressed regret to Mrs Gresson [the Edinburgh acquaintance who put him in touch with Springhall] that he could not do anything actively to assist its work”) and his imagined destination of the information shared (“he stated that he was under the impression that the information which he passed to Springhall would be discussed by the Central Committee of the Communist Party [of Great Britain]”).³¹

By the mid-1980s, two intelligence historians, M.R.D. Foot and Anthony Glees, had noted Uren’s recent interjections in the press, and a third, David Stafford, had accurately observed that “evidence is lacking as to Uren’s offense.”³² Otherwise, Uren’s comments in 1981 and 1982 barely impacted others’ accounts of his case. In the 1980s, claims unburdened by evidence ranged from Andrew Sinclair and John Costello’s pointed descriptions of Uren as a “Cambridge graduate” to Chapman Pincher’s insistence that Uren had been a secret CPGB member.³³ By the late 1990s, Uren was routinely described as having been imprisoned for passing information to the USSR.³⁴

Given the frequency with which writers describe Uren as an “agent” and couple his case to themes of Soviet espionage, it might be expected that research among Soviet files has revealed that Uren’s disclosures reached Soviet eyes, for instance, or that he was less unwitting in his dealings with Springhall than he later suggested. Even M.R.D. Foot, one of his more empathetic chroniclers, appeared to accept that Uren had given secrets to the Soviets.³⁵ In fact, the only discovery among Soviet archives so far harnessed to Uren’s story does none of those things. This is a report from Kim Philby that purported to pass along a few details that he had gleaned from a conversation with David Clark, an MI5 officer who had worked on Uren’s case. “Clark told me that Uren might easily have got away scot-free if he had realized the scantiness of the knowledge in the possession of the British authorities,” reads the pertinent passage of Philby’s report. “If he had maintained steadily that, although approached by Springhall, he had refused to supply him with information, the authorities could never have broken him. He was, however, unable to stand the strain of the interrogation, and ended up by confessing everything.”³⁶

Today, MI5 files confirm that Clark had worked on Uren’s case. Moreover, they suggest that Clark’s remarks, as reported by Philby, were a sound assessment of the state of MI5’s evidence against Uren. It is clear from Uren’s MI5 file, as well as from the proceedings of his court-martial, that his admissions to MI5 provided every vital item of evidence that convicted him. Nothing else came to light that was incriminating. The two written documents that Uren claimed to have passed to Springhall were never recovered. Springhall refused to speak when MI5 questioned him. No one else interviewed in connection with the case or, indeed, any other evidence confirmed the character of the secrets that Uren claimed to have shared or where they went. Nor has evidence emerged since 1943 to add meaningfully to any aspect of this picture, except, perhaps, a greater sense of certainty surrounding Springhall’s then-suspected contact with Soviet officials in London. Indeed, it remains impossible, contrary to what might be supposed from decades of claims about it, to be certain of multiple features of Uren’s case, from the content of his disclosures to Springhall to his reasons for disclosing them.

MOTIVES AND INTENTIONS

Published in 1990, Harry Hinsley and Anthony Simkins’ fourth volume in the official history of Britain’s wartime intelligence services, dedicated to security and counterintelligence and written with privileged access to contemporary documents, briefly mentions Uren in relation to the CPGB’s “different loyalty” and “conspiratorial side” during the war. An unreferenced paragraph notes how Springhall’s arrest had led to the discovery of several “contacts” from whom he had received information, one being an SOE officer, “Captain

Ormond Uren,” who had provided “a written account” of SOE “and described his work there.” The only other detail—a new one—is that “the organizer of the Russia Today Society in Scotland” had introduced Uren to Springhall as “someone who wanted to help the Communist Party.”³⁷ Hinsley and Simkins did not venture a definitive explanation of Uren’s motives. They made no mention of Cambridge, CPGB membership, or secrets reaching the Soviets. Nor did they describe him as an agent or as guilty of espionage or treachery. Barely departing from the War Office’s announcement of November 1943, theirs is a passage that, as MI5 records demonstrate, accurately reflects the paucity of available evidence for why Uren acted as he had.

“I disclosed the information to Springhall to show that I had complete faith in him and that he could have complete trust in me as a sincere believer in Communism,” Uren was quoted by the War Office as telling the court.³⁸ Few writers attempting to fathom Uren’s impulses have confined his motives to that. Uren, for his part, remained consistent. For David Stafford, Uren was “far from being some hard-bitten Soviet mole. On the contrary, he was naïve, uncertain, and confused. The night before handing the envelope to Springhall he walked around Regent’s Park arguing the pros and cons to himself.” Stafford’s source was an interview with Uren conducted for a BBC television series broadcast in 2000. Although that interview was never broadcast, Stafford had access to the transcript. “I felt an enormous relief,” Stafford quotes Uren as saying of the moment when he heard of Springhall’s arrest: “I thought, Oh thank God, I don’t need to go on with this anymore.”³⁹ To this author, in 2002, Uren reflected on his mindset and motives:

I had read a certain amount of Marxist literature—The Communist Manifesto and some of the Left Book Club publications that were seen everywhere in “progressive” homes in the 1930s. One that impressed me was a simplified outline of Marxist economics by Leo Huberman entitled *Man’s Worldly Goods*. There was also *The Socialist Sixth of the World* by the “red” Dean of Canterbury. ... I was very ignorant of history and economics and the picture these books and others painted seemed to me to make sense.

Also ... I had grown up in the 1930s. My school, Ackworth, was a Quaker school and had already taken in some German Jewish children, early refugees from Hitler’s persecution. I was passionately interested in Spain and everything Spanish and my sympathies had naturally been on the side of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War.

I wanted to join the Communist Party. I met Springhall. ... [At] the first meeting ... I told him where I was working, naturally, and he told me to put in writing an outline of the sort of work I was doing and he would pass it on to the proper people and they would decide

whether I could be a member of the Party. ... [At a later meeting] I handed him this outline. And that is all. ... I did not look on Springhall as an agent of the NKVD. I took at face value his title of "National Organiser." I did not see myself as volunteering information to the Soviet Union, but as simply wanting to be integrated in this "great" movement. It was obvious that if I was to be of use to the Party they had to know what sort of work I was doing, but in the fantasy scenario in my head it did not go any further than that.

Consequently, he concluded, "when, that September, I was called into the office of Major Roche, the Security Officer, and confronted with an MI5 officer ... who said something about 'spying' I was seriously taken aback. In the fantasy I had been living it had never occurred to me that what I had been doing was 'spying.'"⁴⁰

MI5 records confirm that those later explanations do not differ substantially from Uren's contemporary ones. In all, Uren gave three statements to MI5. The first began with a brief biography and described some of the information that he had shared with Springhall.⁴¹ It also contained Uren's explanation for how and why he had come to be in touch with him. Uren claimed that his "sympathy for the Communist Party" had evolved quickly after his commission in 1940, "sustained by the dullness and seeming pointlessness of the repetitive training which we were undergoing and by contact with friends of similar sympathies when I was on leave." In 1941, he responded to an army call for volunteers with language skills and the following year was interviewed by and posted to SOE. But he maintained his "attachment to Communism" and contacts with like-minded friends and felt "considerable admiration for the energy and enthusiasm of members of the Communist Party whom I met," which fostered "a desire to co-operate with them." It was "while in this state of mind" that he met Helen Gresson, whom he knew as an organizer in Scotland of the procommunist "Russia To-Day Society." To her, he "expressed on several occasions my sympathy with the aims of the Communist Party and my regrets that I was in London isolated from any opportunity of co-operating or doing anything practical to give concrete expression to my sympathy. ... I asked her for guidance on this matter. ... She offered to introduce me to Springhall ... whom she said she would be meeting during a visit to London in April [1943]." A rendezvous at the Pop-Inn Restaurant, on Charing Cross Road, was duly arranged and kept. "He asked me a good deal about my own political background," Uren explained of this first meeting with Springhall, "and I said that, although I had not ever taken an active part in politics, I was eager to work with the Communist Party and that I felt isolated in my present position and would be glad for advice as to what I could usefully do. ... His replies to this were non-committal ... but [we] arranged a further meeting at

which he said he would be able to say something more definite. He also asked me to prepare a written report comprising my life history, education, and political social background.”⁴² In a subsequent statement, Uren admitted to sharing written details about SOE as well. He also claimed that his “feelings” about doing so were “divided. ... I did feel uneasy about the nature of the information which I had divulged and I was glad to be free of any obligation when Springhall [was arrested].”⁴³

MI5 was able to confirm several elements of this account, as its records demonstrate. In June 1943, Springhall had been arrested on suspicion of obtaining secret information from an Air Ministry employee working on radio countermeasures, Olive Mary Sheehan: the offense for which he was subsequently jailed in July.⁴⁴ The police also seized his diary, and, when the dates, meetings, and names within it were scrutinized, one entry considered worthy of further investigation was a meeting of Springhall’s with “Helen” and “Ray Milne” at the Pop-Inn on 9 April.⁴⁵ Helen was quickly identified as Helen Gresson, whom MI5 knew already to be connected to Russia To-Day. Promptly interviewed, she explained that she had indeed arranged for “two friends who were politically isolated in London” to meet Springhall on 9 April: “These two friends were Ray Milne and Ormond Uren.”⁴⁶ Ray Milne, too, was traced and interviewed. A young woman employed on the London staff of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS), she confirmed that she had asked Helen Gresson for help in becoming better connected to the CPGB, and it was for her that Gresson had originally arranged the Pop-Inn meeting with Springhall. Milne also recalled discussing with Uren the “life story” that Springhall had asked him to write: “Actually he [Uren] asked me my opinion of it, and I said I thought the document was too long-winded, or words to that effect. It was in handwriting and he wished to have it typed and asked if I knew anyone who had a typewriter, but I said I did not.”⁴⁷

Was it really about a desire to impress “the proper people” and thereby “join” the party? There are inconsistencies across Uren’s statements to MI5. In his first statement, he mentioned only three meetings with Springhall and handing over his “life history.” Only when he was told to sign that statement to confirm the truth of it did Uren say that he should say more; and in a second statement he duly admitted that he had in fact met Springhall five or six times and given him a written description of SOE. But none of that is necessarily proof of more than an initial desire on Uren’s part to conceal the worst of what he had done, or that his motives and actions were as nefarious as postwar writers have tried to make out. Nor does any available evidence dispute Uren’s account of how and why he had come to be put in touch with Springhall or suggest that Gresson and Milne gave testimonies preprepared to chime with his. When he informed her that Milne’s contact with Springhall had led to her losing her job, MI5’s Edward Cussen recorded that Gresson

had been “greatly upset” at the news and “even more distressed” when he told her that Uren was to be tried by court-martial: “She said, and I believe her, that she will reproach herself all her life with having been the cause of the misfortunes of Ray Milne and Uren.”⁴⁸

Here it is pertinent to acknowledge that, despite everything written about him as a Soviet agent and spy, Uren was not tried as a traitor or for espionage. As its proceedings make clear, his court-martial was about establishing a breach of the Official Secrets Act; it was not about his motive for breaching it. To be convicted, Uren had to be found guilty of three things: that he had communicated sensitive information to a person unauthorized to receive it; that the information was of a character calculated to be, or might be, directly or indirectly useful to an enemy; and that that information had been communicated for a purpose prejudicial to the safety or interests of the state. Uren’s defense was limited to the third of these and took the form of arguing that Uren’s motive had not been to harm the state:

The court has heard the evidence of Capt. Uren and the explanation which he has given. However blameworthy and however crazy his motives may be considered by the court, I think it must accede that the accused is and was at all events ... sincere in his addiction to Communism. It was guileless sincerity that led him to act as he did ...

Whatever the court may think of Capt. Uren—and I have no doubt you will not allow his political views to influence your judgment—it is my submission that his explanation as to motive is to be believed ...

I submit with every confidence that Capt. Uren, though he did an act of madness about which there can be no doubt, was not possessed of any such appalling or odious motive as the present charge alleges.

In a trial of this type, however, intention (i.e., the conscious decision to carry out a purposeful action that is forbidden by law) mattered more than motive (i.e., the underlying/ulterior reasons for that action). Moreover, the threshold of evidence required to prove the former was not high. As the judge advocate explained when summing up: “[I]f you find it proved that information relating to a prohibited place [i.e., a secret establishment such as SOE] within the meaning of this Act has been communicated by any person other than a person acting under lawful authority, then it is for *the accused* [author’s italics] to show that he was not acting detrimentally to the country’s interests or safety.” That being the case, the prosecution’s steady focus on contrasting Uren’s actions with the rules laid down in SOE’s security regulations—rather than establishing his motives for acting as he did—becomes easier to understand. (“Q. Has not your whole training in security led you to believe

that once information which is closely guarded by security regulations within a department leaks outside, security breaks down altogether? A. I have been taught that, yes. Q. And do you realize that the information which you have passed to Springhall has now passed beyond the bounds of supervision and capacity to check it? A. Yes.”) Uren was even made to read aloud from his original office copy of those regulations: the same copy that he had once signed to confirm that he had read and understood it. (“Q... I can take it you are a person of education and intelligence and that you did understand what was in that book and that you did not sign it blindly ... ?”)⁴⁹

It bears emphasizing that Uren’s motives for dealing with Springhall were, and remain, impossible to confirm. The same goes for the content of the information that Uren claimed to have shared with him. When MI5 visited Springhall in Wormwood Scrubs to question him about the whereabouts of Uren’s written documents, his only responses were “I’m saying nothing” and some suspicious body language: “[W]hen the name of Captain Uren and the name of Ray Milne were mentioned, Springhall was visibly disturbed.”⁵⁰ The two reports that Uren claimed to have written were never recovered. At his court-martial, all evidence for their existence, as well as for their content, came from his own statements; only Ray Milne’s recollection of glimpsing the “life story” that Uren had written for Springhall, and of his subsequent anxiety, after news of Springhall’s arrest, about its fate, could back it up.⁵¹ But Uren’s statements to MI5 remain revealing. As this article now discusses, they can illuminate the potential implications for secret organizations of employing individuals whose loyalties lie elsewhere, as well as the extent to which postwar claims about the case have ever possessed evidence to support them.

SIGNIFICANCE OF UREN’S DISCLOSURES

In 1984, M.R.D. Foot felt sure enough to state that Ormond Uren had known “a good deal less than [Kim] Philby” about SOE and cannot have told the Russians “anything they did not already know.” Of the potential of homegrown communists to have engaged in wartime activity counter to British interests, Foot also argued that, for as long as Britain and the Soviet Union were wartime allies, men of that sort whom SOE employed could not have done much damage. Of Philby, James Klugmann and John Eyre, Foot wrote:

What harm, at that moment, was any of them doing to the allied war effort against the axis? “Our gallant Soviet ally”, that phrase, reiterated from countless platforms and in countless broadcasts in 1942–43, was a great deal more than a phrase. It was only this solidly tyrannous lifebelt that kept the grand alliance of free peoples afloat

through those two terrible years. Stalin's and Beria's iniquities have now become journalists' commonplaces and were iniquitous indeed; yet hindsight, though it sometimes clarifies, can also distort. Had it not been for Stalin and Beria and their iron grip on the Soviet Empire ... Great Britain would have lost the war against Nazi Germany.⁵²

Foot knew little about what Uren might have disclosed. He also underplayed the potential outcomes of occasions when loyalty to an ideology or creed is accorded priority over that to a nation-state. Today, Uren's statements to MI5, now declassified, contain detailed descriptions of the information that he claimed to have passed to Douglas Springhall. If these accurately represent the information that he had shared, it is not difficult to understand why Uren's disclosures were viewed in court so seriously, as the court-martial proceedings demonstrate. SOE records documenting his day-to-day duties, meanwhile, underline the gravity of the case.

According to the War Office announcement of November 1943, Uren had given Springhall two written reports that described "his life history, education and political and social background" and "the lay-out of the establishment in which he was working." Later, Nigel West claimed that Uren had given Springhall "a substantial amount of intelligence" comprising "secret SOE communications information," "details of SOE policy in the Balkans, Poland and Czechoslovakia," and even "a floor-plan of Norgeby House."⁵³ Few subsequent writers moved far from these descriptions. For Philip Knightley and Richard Thurlow, for instance, Uren disclosed "a description of SOE's headquarters."⁵⁴ Anthony Cave Brown has it as SOE's "internal structure."⁵⁵ For Chapman Pincher, it was "the complete layout of SOE's organization."⁵⁶ John Costello says it was "details of SOE communications and policy for Eastern Europe," while Stephen Dorrell describes it as "details of SOE policy and communications on Eastern Europe."⁵⁷ David Aaronovitch claims that it was SOE's "entire operational structure."⁵⁸

No postwar published claims match the substance of Uren's detailed statements to MI5 in 1943. According to those statements, he met Springhall on six occasions ("I think") between April and June 1943, including their first meeting at the Pop Inn arranged by Helen Gresson.⁵⁹ The next took place "in St Martin's Lane at the end of a small alleyway," the third "at the corner of Charing Cross Road by Zwemmer's bookshop," and the last ones "outside the Grafton Hotel, Tottenham Court Road."⁶⁰ On every occasion, the two were alone, stayed in the street, and spoke.

Springhall questioned me during all these meetings on various aspects of this Department's work but, as far as I can remember, many of the

questions did not seem to me to be particularly relevant and I was unable to answer many of them. Among other things, he questioned me as to my knowledge of future military operations, whether I knew anything of an impending Second Front in the near future, to which I answered quite truthfully that I knew nothing.⁶¹

On other topics, Uren was more forthcoming. "I said I was concerned with the Balkans and particularly Hungary. The question of the merits of [General Draza] Mihailovitch [*sic*] [leader of the royalist Yugoslav Chetnik guerrillas] vis-à-vis the [communist-led] Partisans was touched on and I expressed the opinion that the Partisans were the real resisting force in Yugoslavia. I also stated that my Department was supporting General Mihailovitch and that they were also considering supporting the Partisans."⁶² He also claimed to have told Springhall that "something like 80 per cent" of Greece was controlled by "the Republican [*sic*] E.A.M., whereas the [rival] Zervas forces had only small support. ... [Also] there seemed little eagerness within Greece among the resisting organizations to see the King of Greece returned to the Throne." Uren also admitted to mentioning the name of SOE's then head, Sir Charles Hambro.⁶³

As for the two written documents that he claimed to have handed to Springhall, the first, Uren explained, was a report "comprising my life history, education and political and social background, on the basis of which he expected to be able to say something more definite [about my wish to do work for the party]." Springhall had apparently requested this at their first meeting and Uren passed it across at their next. The second document, handed over in an envelope at their final meeting, consisted of "three typewritten foolscap sheets" providing "a general description" of SOE's "position and function." The details within this second document, so Uren described them to MI5, ranged from its name ("S.O.E., or Special Operations Executive") and London location ("in and around Baker Street") to its purpose ("the pursuance of H.M.G. [His Majesty's Government]'s policy by subversive and unavowable means," involving "the organisation and support of resistance movements by sending agents, W/T [wireless telegraphy] sets and supplies of arms and money" in occupied countries, and, in neutral ones, "the clandestine support of groups favorable to the British and various black-market and other unavowable transactions, pre-emptive buying, etc. aimed at hindering the economic activities of the Axis"). It mentioned, too, that SOE had missions, sub-missions, and representatives in other locations, from Cairo and Washington to Moscow and Chungking, and that these were in contact with London via secret cipher. Uren had also described SOE's "lay-out" in Britain, meaning its structure in terms of directorates (Operations, Intelligence, Security, Training, Communications, and Supplies), and briefly described the purposes of each ("The Operations Directorate ... is concerned

with the transport of agents, supplies, etc., by parachute to occupied countries. ... The Training Directorate ... is responsible for the training of agents as saboteurs, W/T operators or organisers at a series of schools situated in different parts of the country"). He had described, too, the "close liaison" maintained by SOE with other government departments, including the Ministry of Economic Warfare ("who are responsible for allocating priorities of targets from the point of view of [the] Axis economic position"), the Foreign Office ("who determine the political line to be followed by the Department [i.e., SOE] in any country and in dealing with any political group"), the Chiefs of Staff ("who determine priorities from the point of view of forthcoming strategic requirements"), the Ministry of Supply and the War Office ("on questions of supplies of material and personnel, etc."), the Political Intelligence Department and BBC ("on questions of propaganda as it effects [*sic*] the work of the organisation"), SIS, and MI5. The character of SOE's relations with Allied governments had also been mentioned in the document, as well as the nature of his own "daily duties."⁶⁴

The gravity with which Uren's disclosures were viewed in court can be sensed from the testimonies of the only two witnesses called by the prosecution. The first was MI5's Edward Cussen. The prosecution questioned him principally about the circumstances in which Uren's statements to MI5 came to be made and recorded. After those statements were read to the court, Cussen was asked by the prosecution to consider "the possible repercussions, from the security point of view, of the divulging of information of this nature to a person like Springhall who was not a person authorised to receive it." Cussen replied: "I view it as a most serious and appalling communication. Once the information of that kind passes into the hands of an unauthorised person, such as Springhall, it is quite impossible properly to safeguard it, and as it is information which is of vital use to the enemy, it is, in my view, a divulging of information which is prejudicial to the safety of the State."⁶⁵

The evidence of the second witness, Thomas Roche, SOE's assistant director of security, related specifically to the significance of Uren's breach in relation to SOE's security. Tom Roche's comments were lengthier and more detailed than Cussen's but his assessment of the matter's seriousness was much the same. Asked to "tell the court, from your experience as an officer in SOE," how he regarded the account that Uren claimed to have passed to Springhall, Roche replied that he considered its contents "most highly secret. ... I have seldom seen so much information [of that nature] gathered together in one document. There are many people inside the organisation who know most of it, but I do not think a great many people in the organisation would know the whole of the information which is contained in those statements. [And] I think there are very few outside the organisation

who would know all those facts.” The prosecution’s questioning of Roche continued:

Q. How do you regard the disclosure of [the name of Sir Charles Hambro]?

A. It is a most closely guarded secret. There were special instructions that that was not to be mentioned outside and to facilitate that it was forbidden inside the organisation to refer to him by name ...

Q. How do you regard the mention of the initials “S.O.E.” or the title “Secret [*sic*] Operations Executive” to an outsider?

A. That was forbidden because ... it being a non-existent body, the mention of those initials was bound to cause comment as people would try to find out what it was.

Q. Have you any observations to make with regard to the mention in the ... statement [about SOE’s activities] ... in neutral countries?

A. ... No doubt the enemy might suspect activities were going on, but they have no proof. If you once put that in writing and it gets [in] to the hands of the general public, and were to reach the hands of the neutral or the enemy, the position would be extremely grave.⁶⁶

The prosecution then drew Roche’s attention to Uren’s claim to have passed Springhall information concerning SOE’s “Relations with Allied Governments.” In his statement, Uren had written:

There is a close liaison on a low level with the various émigré Governments in this country, although the degree of confidence varies with the Government concerned. The Poles for instance conduct all their own operations to Poland, SOE merely assisting them with facilities for training, with aircraft, etc. They have their own ciphers, which are not known to the British authorities. The position of the Czechs is somewhat similar to that of the Poles. In Yugoslavia and Greece, on the other hand, the work of supporting the guerrilla movements is almost entirely in British hands. The ciphers used are not known to the Governments concerned and their position is more or less that of an advisory body. I have little knowledge of what happens in Western Europe except that there are two French Sections, one of which sends agents under British command and one which sends agents ... under the discipline of the Fighting French.⁶⁷

“Would you ... indicate to the court your views with regard to the statement as to the operations conducted in Poland and the Liaison with the countries mentioned?” Roche was asked. “It is a very serious matter to mention to anyone, otherwise than in the course of duty, the distinctions

between the degrees of co-operation between allies,” he replied. “Nothing can be more likely to promote disaffection and lack of concord than to disclose any distinction between degrees of co-operation.” Unprompted, he added: “I see also the mention of the cipher department. That is, of course, a very, very closely guarded secret. There are not very many people within my organization who are fully aware of the cipher positions with regard to various bodies.”⁶⁸

Concerns about what was at risk were not confined to the views of the prosecution and its witnesses. Summing up, the judge advocate emphasized Roche’s evidence (“he has told you that this department in which the accused was employed is a secret department in the very strictest sense of that word”) and stressed that “the defense themselves” accepted that the “vital information” communicated to Springhall “was calculated to be or might be directly or indirectly useful to an enemy”: even “the defendant ... realised, as indeed everybody in this court must realise, the danger involved to agents who were actually engaged in foreign countries if such information reached enemy hands.”⁶⁹

A further sense of the potential implications of Uren’s disclosures can be gained by reflecting on his day-to-day duties for SOE’s Hungarian Section and the knowledge that he derived from them. These were not explored during the trial, although the proceedings provide a few glimpses. Evidence given by Lieutenant Colonel Harold Perkins, who, in London, had directed the activities of SOE’s Hungarian Section during Uren’s final weeks with it, was confined to a brief character appraisal requested by the defense.⁷⁰ When recounting what he had told Springhall, however, Uren claimed to have described his role in London as a “sub-office” of Cairo concerned with “recruiting and training Balkan personnel; their dispatch to the Middle East for operations; interpreting Cairo’s wishes on all questions to ... [relevant] departments of the [British] Government ... and interpreting directives on questions of propaganda, political line, etc., to the head office in Cairo. Apart from this, we prepare reports on the progress of our work and appreciations in the countries with which we are dealing for the Foreign Office and Chiefs of Staff.”⁷¹ In a written statement prepared for the court, Tom Roche recorded his own opinion that, given the small size of London’s Hungarian Section and that it was essentially Cairo’s back office, Uren had been “in possession of much more information than would be the case of an officer of his rank in a larger office, since all instructions and directives to Cairo passed through his Section, in which at most material times there was only one other officer besides himself.”⁷²

No surviving records explain why the prosecution chose not to examine Uren’s “daily duties” more fully. Probably everyone felt that what Uren had admitted to sharing with Springhall was incriminating enough, given the

charges. Possibly, there were security reasons for not discussing, even in camera, more of SOE's secrets than was necessary. Today, though, declassified SOE records provide considerable insight into Uren's work for its Hungarian Section, the nature of the information to which he had direct access, and his grasp of its detail. Nothing in them supports West's claims that Uren's "unmasking ... as a Soviet spy in its midst" affected the ability of SOE's Hungarian Section to get agents into the field, that Uren was Springhall's source for a story that the British Government wished to cheat the Soviet Union by withholding strategic information, and that Uren was positioned to assist the Red Army's westward push and change "the map of Europe."⁷³ Nor do they confirm suggestions that Uren possessed "information about peace feelers received by SOE from Hungary."⁷⁴ Leaf through the files of SOE's Hungarian Section, however, and it becomes clear that Uren had been privy to a wide range of information about SOE activities concerning Hungary, ranging from details of SOE's aims, plans, and operations, to the identities of its contacts, recruits, and agents.

A long memorandum penned by Uren in April 1943, nine days after his first meeting with Springhall, is an effective example. At that moment, a decision was pending over whether SOE operations into Hungary should be controlled in London or Cairo: Uren's paper summarized his thoughts on the matter in relation to SOE's intentions and capabilities as he understood them. "Our general aim [in Hungary] is ... 'to produce a situation which will be of some advantage to the [Allied] Military Command advancing up through the Balkans [in the event of future Allied deployments there].'" he began, quoting a senior officer's recent memo on the subject. SOE would achieve this situation, Uren went on, via the following steps: "acts of sabotage" carried out by pro-Allied Hungarians; the infiltration of a British officer to observe, report, and assist; and the subsequent sending of "Hungarian and British" reinforcements with a view to establishing British control over anti-Axis activity in the event of German occupation of Hungary, an Allied landing in the Balkans, or a development of similar magnitude. He then described the situation regarding SOE operations in Hungary at that moment. These were not extensive, consisting only of a single radio operator sent to Poland with a view to infiltrating from there into Hungary, the dispatch to Hungary of a suitcase radio set in the hands of a courier who would also arrange for the operator's arrival, and the expectation that a Hungarian army officer would shortly arrive in neutral Istanbul "to discuss sabotage and the reception of British personnel." There was also the prospect of a British officer being dropped by parachute into Hungary in June. Depending on that officer's success, SOE could look ahead to achieving its aims in Hungary by dispatching "further equipment and personnel," including "sabotage equipment and propaganda material," but

“the chief need” would be for “organisers” and radio operators. Meeting that need would permit the building of a wide network of sub-missions in different parts of Hungary, “thus giving a greater chance of maintaining the continuity of our work in the event of a chaotic situation. Our experience in Greece and Yugoslavia points to the wisdom of having British officers in charge of the sub-missions of such an organisation, and we should try to infiltrate the largest possible number of British officers at an early stage and thus ensure our control of resistance from the start.” Uren added the codenames (symbols, in SOE terminology) and brief details of six personnel whom SOE had to hand and who might make suitable reinforcements: four were Hungarian volunteers who had completed or were undergoing training; two were British officers, of whom he was one (“D/H127—Hungarian speaking British officer, [with] experience of work in London office”). Against this background, Uren laid out the contrasting benefits, as he saw them, of controlling these activities from London or from Cairo: London had the advantage of being closer to clandestine courier channels through Sweden, Spain, and Portugal, for instance, while Cairo was well placed for liaising with Allied commanders whose responsibilities covered southeast Europe and closer to Istanbul, a superior courier hub (“couriers are not hampered by the necessity of procuring German or Italian visas...”). On balance, Uren felt, Cairo was the best choice.⁷⁵

Other SOE documents demonstrate Uren’s doubts about its ability to penetrate Hungary. Problems ranged from the logistical difficulties of getting agents into the country to the paucity of details known about local conditions and the questionable quality of its available volunteers. In October 1942, commenting on plans to send SOE’s first agents into Hungary and whether or not they should go via the United Kingdom or the Middle East, Uren was pessimistic about London’s ability to adequately prepare and dispatch them. “As a section, we are not equipped at the moment to work out and put into effect an operational dropping over Hungary. This is practically a full-time job for one man who should have time and the knowledge to undertake a thorough briefing of the agents. This briefing for a country like Hungary would have to be of a very detailed nature and would necessitate a good deal of research into such questions as police regulations, cover, and so on, which we have not, as we are at present constituted, the time to do in the manner required.” The need to “thoroughly” instruct these agents was underlined, he added, by the fact that SOE’s present Hungarian recruits “are not in themselves first-class men.”⁷⁶

The significant degree to which senior officers relied on Uren’s input also emerges from SOE’s paperwork. For example, letters exchanged between him and Harold Perkins in July 1943, when Uren was the only SOE staff officer in London concerned full time with Hungary, reveal both his grip at that

moment of its Hungarian activities and that Perkins valued his advice. Uren, then, was on a staff course at an SOE training school in Hampshire, and Perkins, in London, had recently taken control of its Hungarian activities and was in the process of trying to fathom them. "Your most interesting files kept me in the office until 2 o'clock this morning," Perkins' correspondence began, "by which time all the various and complicated politics and personalities had become completely confused." He now saw "a certain amount of daylight" but wanted help with an enclosed list of queries, "which most probably you could clear up in a few seconds if you were with me, but which cannot be answered from the files." The queries ranged from questions about the identities of certain Hungarians to requests for clarification of Foreign Office policy.⁷⁷ Uren's detailed response, written the next day and without sight of the same files, suggests an informed and confident grasp of the information that Perkins wanted. Symbols and identities were efficiently explained ("A/H220 is General Andorka, former Hunk [i.e., Hungarian] Minister in Madrid. ... A/H6 is a newspaperman, non-Jewish, of good family and left-wing views. ... B.1 is the Jug Section [i.e., SOE's Yugoslav Section] in M.E. [i.e., the Middle East]..."). Foreign Office policy was discussed with an apparent understanding of pertinent and possible influences on it ("I am doubtful if F.O. has ever made up their minds on policy for Hungary [but] any policy they evolve must take largely into consideration the attitude of the Jugs [i.e., Yugoslavs] and the Czechs [from whom Hungary had seized territory] as well as that of the Russians. All three of these Allied countries have suffered considerably at the hands of the [Hungarians] and any Hungarian government which is not a clean break with the current regime will probably be unacceptable to them. On the other hand, a group which makes a valuable contribution to the Allied war effort ... can expect to be treated more considerately."). Demonstrating that political differences between Hungarian resistance fighters were known as well as relevant to SOE, Uren's own view was that, in present circumstances, "our policy must be to put our eggs into as many (anti-axis) baskets as possible": the Hungarian "left" was likely to offer SOE "much more unconditional support" but "there are elements on the right (i.e. conservative in outlook) who may be willing to play with us for reasons of personal reinsurance. As these people are wealthy and have a good deal of influence, they are in a position to offer us considerable facilities. ... [I]n a country as uncertain as Hungary we should aim at having a foot in both camps."⁷⁸

Further documents shed light on Uren's knowledge of SOE's Hungarian volunteers and prospective and possible helpers. In November 1942, for instance, a list that he had "prepared personally" contained the names and brief biographies of several Hungarians assessed to be potential contacts in the country. The list included a royalist political leader (Count Anton

Sigray), a radical political journalist (Zoltan Gaspar), a socialist politician (Anna Kethley), and a managing director of the Budapest National Savings Bank.⁷⁹ Later paperwork shows him paying attention to potential Hungarian contacts in Lisbon, meeting and corresponding with Hungarian émigrés in Britain, recruiting and training Hungarian volunteers, and briefing those selected for operations.⁸⁰ Once, when Uren briefed two agents together, their instructions included such details as secure addresses in Switzerland to which they must write from Hungary, the style required to show that they were not writing under duress, and passwords to exchange with anyone whom SOE sent to contact them.⁸¹

It is not difficult to appreciate how details like these could have imperiled SOE's work into Hungary if Britain's enemies had learned of them. But care must be taken to avoid supposing that Uren had actually shared with Springhall this kind of granular detail. If his statements to MI5 represent what had actually passed between them, the three-page document that he handed to Springhall contained no information about Hungary, and Springhall had not requested information of that kind anyway. Nevertheless, it remains important to consider what more Uren might have done, or been made to do, if he and Springhall had not been stopped, as Uren himself would note. Forty years later, he reflected that, if Springhall had actually requested the sort of information that West accused Uren of possessing and sharing, "I would most probably—in the state of mind I was in at the time—have passed it on." He also acknowledged that, by sharing information with Springhall, he had created, for others, "a means of blackmail should I subsequently change my mind and wish to back out."⁸² As it was, MI5 "got in first."⁸³

In their 1981–1982 contretemps, West accused Uren of playing down the significance of his disclosures to Springhall.⁸⁴ It certainly seems that their content was more significant than Uren would later admit. Whether he deliberately minimized their significance is debatable, however. Thirty-eight years separated Uren's statements to MI5 and his public response to West. In 2002, he was still relying on memory when fielding questions about the case, having never seen his statements to MI5 since penning them or any of the SOE documents drawn on here. His SOE personnel file was never revealed to him, and the MI5 files documenting its investigation into him were declassified four years after his death. Consideration might also be given to Uren's mental state in 1943. In the interview transcript seen by David Stafford, Uren talks of blurred memories of what happened after Roche and Cussen confronted him and of being in a state of shock throughout his trial. In 2002, to this author, he wrote:

The question remains: what exactly *did* I tell Springhall? And I have no very precise memory of this. I can only assume and infer. I assume and have so far assumed in everything I have said so far about this,

that what I gave him would be consistent with the situation as I saw it: my applying for membership of the party. I do remember writing out one, or was it two? foolscap sheets. I may have included details about myself and my background. Naturally, I would have told him that I was working in an organisation that sent people into Europe to organise resistance, sabotage, etc. to the Germans. I may have said something about [my] plans to drop into Hungary, but at that point the plans would not have been very far advanced and I certainly gave no precise details. I may well have said something about our having people in Yugoslavia with Tito ... though I am sure I gave no names or other details. I was certainly not aware of any higher-level policy decisions, nor, if I had been, do I think that that would have been relevant at that stage. I am perfectly satisfied that nothing that I told Springhall had the slightest effect on the progress of the war, or did any harm to anyone other than myself.⁸⁵

Pertinent, too, is how openly and self-critically Uren appears to have discussed the case in later life, when, as he put it in *The Listener* in 1981, “the 62-year-old that I now am has no possible interest or motive in concealing anything of what was done by the young man of 23 that I was in 1943.”⁸⁶ “What on earth could I have to lose at this remove if I were to admit that I had passed on much more information to ‘the Russians?’” he remarked to this author in 2002, by when he was eighty-two, had been retired for twenty years, and knew that friends and family were aware of his past but did not judge him on it. “If that were the case, I would be no more or less ashamed or reluctant to admit it than what I *do* admit.”⁸⁷

CONCLUSION

A week after Ormond Uren’s court-martial, SOE’s Tom Roche traveled to Edinburgh to visit Myrtle Uren and explain “Ormond’s present predicament.” The findings were not yet promulgated but the outlook was not good. “Mrs Uren said that her son had always been a rash and unheeding youth, but she was convinced that he would never betray his country to the enemy,” MI5 recorded afterwards. “Happily Roach [*sic*] was able to confirm this, and indicated that perhaps her son’s somewhat advanced or extreme ways of thought had engendered his confused ideas of loyalty.”⁸⁸ Despite his mother’s conviction and Roche’s assurances, it was impossible then, and remains impossible now, to be certain of Uren’s motives for acting as he did, of the precise nature of the information that he shared with Douglas Springhall, of what became of that information, and of what he might have done, or been made to do, had MI5 not intervened.

Uren was convicted at his court-martial on the strength of the evidence contained within his own statements, coupled with the prosecution proving

its case that what he admitted to disclosing to Springhall represented a security breach that significantly contravened the Official Secrets Act. Despite postwar claims to the contrary, Uren was neither accused nor convicted of spying; War Office and press reporting made this clear at the time; MI5 records and the court proceedings confirm it. Nor has evidence emerged since the trial that convincingly disputes Uren's motives and connections as he described them after MI5 caught him. It is credible that Uren was as "rash and unheeding" as he had seemed to his mother and that he never considered his actions to be in any way treacherous. To claim otherwise is to claim too much of what is known. Writers who describe Uren as "one of the Soviet agents within the British intelligence services" and "part of a spy ring"—Christopher Andrew's recent descriptions of him—might also reflect on the aptness of such emotive terminology when applying it without qualification.⁸⁹

Uren's case retains historical importance, however. It provides a convincing illustration of how employees' dual loyalties can undermine the security of secret agencies. It also points to degrees of harm that might be done as a result: even Uren agreed that the information that he claimed to have disclosed to Springhall held the potential, if it reached the enemy via those who had no authority to know or handle it, to undermine SOE's efforts and endanger agents' lives. In court, Uren's statements were considered sufficient evidence of his disclosures; today, SOE records, especially documents that reveal the nature of information with which his daily duties made him familiar, can provide a sense of what was at risk in reality. But this is also an episode that encourages consideration of how different commentators have presented its essentials since 1943. For some, it was a notable tale of Soviet espionage. Others framed it as a wartime wakeup call to the risks of employing ideologues—Cambridge-educated or otherwise—in posts with access to sensitive information. For Uren, it was a painful chapter of his life that, decades later, became badly distorted in its telling. It has been argued here that the case stands also as an example of how historical narratives can emerge and become established despite an absence of convincing evidence to support them.

REFERENCES

- ¹ The UK National Archives (TNA), KV 2/4471, Lieutenant Colonel P. Perfect to Major E. J. P. Cussen, 8 November 1943. Sir Oswald Mosley was leader of the British Union of Fascists. Detained in May 1940 at the direction of the Home Secretary, he was held in Brixton and Holloway prisons, latterly alongside his wife, until his release, on health grounds, in November 1943.
- ² Nigel West, *Secret War: The Story of SOE, Britain's Wartime Sabotage Organisation* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1992), p. 71; Christopher Andrew

and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), p. 240; Nigel West, *Seven Spies Who Changed the World* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1991), p. 102; Stephen Dorril, *MI6: Fifty Years of Special Operations* (London: Fourth Estate, 2000), p. 8; Chapman Pincher, *Too Secret Too Long: The Great Betrayal of Britain's Crucial Secrets and the Cover-Up* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1984), p. 103; John Cairncross, *The Enigma Spy: An Autobiography* (London: Century, 1997), p. 55; Nigel West, *Counterfeit Spies* (London: St Ermin's Press, 1998), p. 30; Andrew and Gordievsky, *KGB*, p. 242; Leo Marks, *Between Silk and Cyanide: A Codemaker's War 1941–1945* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 397; Chapman Pincher, *Treachery: Betrayals, Blunders and Cover-Ups: Six Decades of Espionage* (Edinburgh: Mainstream, 2011), p. 164.

³ Andrew Sinclair, *The Red and the Blue: Intelligence, Treason and the Universities* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1986), p. 94; Nigel West, "The Hunting of the Moles," *The Observer*, 8 November 1981.

⁴ John Costello, *Mask of Treachery* (London: Collins, 1988), pp. 430–432. See also, for example, Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Penguin, 2010), p. 279.

⁵ TNA, KV 2/4471, War Office announcement, copy sent to Governor, H.M. Prison, Wormwood Scrubs, 17 November 1943. A founder member of the CPGB, Douglas Frank ("Dave") Springhall (1901–1953) had been appointed National Organiser in 1940. Eight MI5 files at the UK National Archives are devoted to him (TNA, KV 2/1594 to KV 2/1598 and KV 2/2063 to KV 2/2065). These and other official records demonstrate MI5's strong suspicion that Springhall was in touch with the Soviet Embassy in London in 1943, and how his arrest, conviction, and contact with Uren heightened concerns about communist sympathizers employed in posts privy to sensitive information. For more on perceptions of Springhall's activities, see, for example: K. D. Ewing, Joan Mahoney, and Andrew Moretta, *MI5, the Cold War, and the Rule of Law* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) pp. 19n, 232–34, 271. Further details about Springhall's surveillance and investigation may yet emerge from this still-to-be-declassified Metropolitan Police file: TNA, MEPO 38/47.

⁶ "7 Years for a Captain," *Daily Mail*, 8 November 1943; "Captain Jailed for 7 Years," *Daily Express*, 8 November 1943; "Seven Years Penal Servitude for Army Officer," *Scotsman*, 8 November 1943; "Captain Gave Away Secrets," *Daily Telegraph*, 8 November 1943.

⁷ "Betrayed Secrets," *Manchester Guardian*, 8 November 1943; "Officer Cashiered and Sentenced," *The Times*, 8 November 1943; "Captain Gaoled for 7 Years for Telling Secrets," *News Chronicle*, 8 November 1943.

⁸ "Captain Told Secrets: 7 Years," *Daily Mirror*, 8 November 1943.

⁹ "Secrets' Offence: 7 Years for Officer," *Daily Worker*, 8 November 1943.

¹⁰ John Baker White, *The Soviet Spy System* (London: The Falcon Press, 1948), pp. 88–91. For comparable attention to available detail, see: Bernard Newman, *Spies in Britain* (London: Robert Hale, 1965), p. 86.

- ¹¹ Francis Noel-Baker, *The Spy Web: A Study of Communist Espionage* (London: Betchworth Press, 1954), pp. 7–8.
- ¹² John Bulloch, *Akin to Treason* (London: Arthur Barker, 1966), pp. 86–87.
- ¹³ Richard Deacon, *A History of the Russian Secret Service* (London: Frederick Muller, 1972), p. 384. See also Richard Deacon, *The British Connection: Russia's Manipulation of British Individuals and Institutions* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1979), p. 137.
- ¹⁴ Andrew Boyle, *Climate of Treason: Five who Spied for Russia* (London: Hutchinson, 1979), p. 214.
- ¹⁵ Nigel West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1909–1945* (London: The Bodley Head, 1981), pp. 279–280.
- ¹⁶ Nigel West, letter, *The Times*, 18 November 1981; Nigel West, letter, *The Listener*, 28 January 1982.
- ¹⁷ Information from Dr. Will Butler (Head, Military Records, National Archives), 31 January 2022.
- ¹⁸ Death notice, *The Times*, 30 December 1965. In London, Perkins, who oversaw SOE's activities into Central Europe, had only been responsible for Hungary since early July 1943. Previously, Uren had worked mostly under the direction of Major E. P. F. (Peter) Boughey (1911–1986). Hungary was rarely a priority for either Boughey or Perkins: both were concerned simultaneously with countries where SOE was significantly more active. Indeed, throughout his time with the Hungarian Section, Uren was the only staff officer whose work was consistently dedicated to it. In 1944, Boughey's own consideration for basic security principles was severely criticized when he proposed to parachute "blind" (i.e. with no one on the ground to receive him) into Hungary. Concerned that an officer with 'long and varied experience of S.O.E. work' could jeopardize other operations if captured and made to talk, SOE security officers objected to his "illogical" plan. (TNA, HS 4/91. "Departure to the Field of Lt. Col Boughey," 17 June 1944). Those officers were overruled, but Boughey was in fact captured on landing.
- ¹⁹ West, "The Hunting of the Moles."
- ²⁰ Ormond Uren, "I Went to Prison for Espionage ... if Only I Had Been to Cambridge!" *The Times*, 10 November 1981. Uren had not written the title, which, he felt, misrepresented the article's point.
- ²¹ West, *The Times*, 18 November 1981. West added, "Mr Uren did not attend Cambridge University, as implied by my reference to his having been 'Cambridge educated' (his SOE file mentioned only a Cambridge language school)." In 2002, Uren stated to this author: "Before the war and for a long time after it, I had never as much as seen Cambridge. I think I first went there for some conference or other in the sixties." Ormond Uren, letter to the author, 18 April 2002.
- ²² Nigel West, letter, *The Listener*, 19 November 1981.
- ²³ Nigel West, letter, *The Listener*, 10 December 1981.
- ²⁴ Ormond Uren, letter, *The Listener*, 7 January 1982.
- ²⁵ Nigel West, *Molehunt: The Full Story of the Soviet Spy in MI5* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1987), p. 176.

- ²⁶ West, *Secret War*, p. 71, 221.
- ²⁷ West, *Counterfeit Spies*, p. 30.
- ²⁸ Nigel West, *Venona: The Greatest Secret of the Cold War* (London: HarperCollins, 1999), p. 60.
- ²⁹ Nigel West, *Mask: MI5's Penetration of the Communist Party of Great Britain* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 224.
- ³⁰ Nigel West, *MI5: British Security Service Operations 1940–1945* (Barnsley: Frontline, 2019), pp. 230–232.
- ³¹ Nigel West, *Churchill's Spy Files: MI5's Top-Secret Reports* (Stroud: The History Press, 2018), pp. 139–140.
- ³² M. R. D. Foot, *SOE* (London: BBC Books, 1984), pp. 145–146; Anthony Glees, *The Secrets of the Service: British Intelligence and Communist Subversion 1939–51* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1987), pp. 140–141; David Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940–1945: The Special Operations Executive, with Documents* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), p. 143.
- ³³ Sinclair, *The Red and the Blue*, p. 94; Costello, *Mask of Treachery*, p. 414; Pincher, *Too Secret Too Long*, p. 103.
- ³⁴ See notes 7 to 10.
- ³⁵ Foot, *SOE*, pp. 145–146.
- ³⁶ Michael Smith, *The Spying Game: The Secret History of British Espionage* (London: Politico's, 2003), p. 314.
- ³⁷ F. H. Hinsley and C. A. G. Simkins, *British Intelligence in the Second World War: Volume 4, Security and Counter-Intelligence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 286.
- ³⁸ TNA, KV 2/4471, War Office announcement, sent under covering note, MI5 to The Governor, H.M. Prison, Wormwood Scrubs, 17 November 1943.
- ³⁹ David Stafford, *Secret Agent: The True Story of the Special Operations Executive* (London: BBC Worldwide, 2000), p. 227.
- ⁴⁰ Uren, letter to the author, 18 April 2002.
- ⁴¹ The biography is worth noting since it explains Uren's Edinburgh connection and the language skills that attracted SOE. "I was born on the 11th July, 1919 at Boulder City, West Australia. My family left Australia when I was about seven years old and went to Scotland where we stayed for about two years and after which my family moved to Canada. I was sent back in 1930 to Ackworth School, near Pontefract, Yorkshire, where I remained until 1934. In 1934 I went to George Watson's College, Edinburgh, which I left in 1936. In the autumn of 1936 I went to Edinburgh University to study Arts with a view to an Honours degree in Modern Languages. In the autumn of 1937 I went to Hungary, where I stayed with friends until 1938. I resumed my studies at Edinburgh University for the year 1938–39. In August, 1939 I was in France from where I returned the day before the outbreak of war and immediately volunteered to join the armed forces. My father is the Rev. A.R. Uren, Ph.D., B.D., a Minister of the Church of Scotland, at present Minister of the Macdonald [sic] Road Church, Edinburgh." TNA, WO 71/1094, "Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.
- ⁴² TNA, WO 71/1094, "Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.

- ⁴³ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Further Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.
- ⁴⁴ TNA, CRIM 1/1523, "Rex v. Springhall," 20 July 1943.
- ⁴⁵ TNA, KV2/2063, diary entry, 9 April 1943.
- ⁴⁶ TNA, KV2/4467, statement by Helen Gresson, 8 September 1943. Chapman Pincher claims that Uren was caught as "a result of routine surveillance": "He was seen talking to Springhall." Pincher, *Too Secret Too Long*, p. 103. In fact, MI5 records show that Gresson's interview brought him to light. Reference to records in MI5's Registry found a trace of Kirstine Uren, "a member of the Young Communist League," who lived in Edinburgh and had a brother in the army. Reference to the Army List then threw up "a Captain O.L. Uren of the Highland Light Infantry who is now specially employed": "This seems very likely to be the same man." TNA, KV2/4467, note by David Clarke, 12 September 1943. Uren's army records then confirmed the family connection and revealed that he had been employed at "I.S.R.B." since May 1942. Aware that ISRB was one of SOE's cover-names, MI5 approached SOE's security officers. On 22 September 1943, Thomas Roche, SOE's assistant director of security, spoke with MI5's Roger Hollis. Roche warned Hollis that "Uren was about to leave for the Balkans," so, after discussing the matter with MI5's Major Edward Cussen, "[we] agreed that in the circumstances there would be no time to impose checks upon Uren before interviewing him. Roche agreed with us that it would be desirable to hear his explanation of his meeting with Springhall, and it was arranged that Cussen should see Uren in Roche's room on Friday, September 24th." TNA, KV2/4467, note by R. H. Hollis, 22 September 1943. It was at that meeting that Roche and Cussen confronted him.
- ⁴⁷ TNA, KV2/4467, "Statement by Mrs. Ray Milne," 30 September 1943. Milne (1914–2007), née Mundell, had studied modern languages at university and completed a doctorate before the war; she had also spent a year in Germany. Uren told MI5 that he had met her in Edinburgh "on several occasions." TNA, WO 71/1094, "Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943. He also said that she had told him that she was employed in SIS on counterintelligence work: "As far as I remember her work consisted of keeping a register of Axis agents in various European countries." TNA, WO 71/1094, "Further Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943. MI5 officer Guy Liddell records that she was in Section V of SIS, "right in the middle of ISOS and everything else," and had admitted to being a member of the CPGB but denied passing information to Springhall. TNA, KV 4/192, diary entries, 7 and 29 September 1943. An absence of evidence to contradict Milne's denial may explain why measures against her went no further than her sacking. Postwar, she and her husband, Harry Milne, whom she had married in 1940, worked as language teachers in Edinburgh, where she played a leading role in establishing the Edinburgh Film Festival.
- ⁴⁸ TNA, KV 2/4467, "Mrs Helen Gresson: General Impressions," report by Major E.J.P. Cussen, 10 October 1943. Cussen was a respected and accomplished barrister (and future Old Bailey judge) whose war work for MI5

- was chiefly dedicated to investigating security breaches and leakages of information.
- ⁴⁹ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Proceedings of a General Court Martial." The Judge Advocate was Lieutenant Colonel Charles Collingwood (1887–1964), Assistant Judge Advocate General from 1943 to 1945.
- ⁵⁰ TNA, KV2/4467, "Statement by Edward James Patrick Cussen," 7 October 1943.
- ⁵¹ TNA, KV2/4467, "Statement by Mrs Ray Milne," 30 September 1943; TNA KV2/4467, "Helen Docherty or Gresson," 9 October 1943.
- ⁵² Foot, *SOE*, pp. 145–146. Philby served on SOE's training staff in 1940 and 1941 and Klugmann and Eyre on the headquarters staff of SOE's Yugoslav and Albanian Sections respectively. For more on Klugmann and Eyre, see: Roderick Bailey, "Communist in SOE: Explaining James Klugmann's Recruitment and Retention," *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2005), pp. 72–97; Geoff Andrews, *The Shadow Man: At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle* (London: I B Tauris, 2015); and Roderick Bailey, *The Wildest Province: SOE in the Land of the Eagle* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008), pp. 252–284.
- ⁵³ West, *MI5*, pp. 279–280.
- ⁵⁴ Philip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1986), p. 207; Philip Knightley, *The Master Spy: The Story of Kim Philby* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf), p. 123n; Richard Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), p. 266.
- ⁵⁵ Anthony Cave Brown, *C: The Rise and Fall of Sir Stewart Menzies, Spymaster to Winston Churchill* (New York: Macmillan, 1987), p. 473.
- ⁵⁶ Pincher, *Treachery*, p. 164.
- ⁵⁷ Dorril, *MI6*, p. 8; *Costello, Mask of Treachery*, p. 414.
- ⁵⁸ David Aaronovitch, *Party Animals: My Family and other Communists* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2016), p. 208.
- ⁵⁹ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Further Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.
- ⁶⁰ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943, and "Further Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*
- ⁶² TNA, WO 71/1094, "Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.
- ⁶³ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Further Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren," 25 September 1943.
- ⁶⁴ *Ibid.* Nothing in MI5 files suggests that Uren gave Springhall a floor plan. Also, Uren had *not* worked in Norgeby House, a block of SOE offices at 83 Baker Street, but in Berkeley Court, a different set of SOE premises, on the corner of Baker Street and Marylebone Road. Ormond Uren, letter to author, 18 April 2002. See also: TNA, HS 8/200, "London Headquarters," 5 October 1943.
- ⁶⁵ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Proceedings of a General Court Martial."
- ⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

- ⁶⁷ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Further statement by Ormond Leyton Uren, 25 September 1943."
- ⁶⁸ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Proceedings of a General Court Martial."
- ⁶⁹ Ibid.
- ⁷⁰ Ibid. Perkins stated that Uren had served under him for about three months and impressed him as "keen," "intelligent," and "trustworthy" during that time. "I had no reason to doubt his good faith or loyalty to me. I found he was exceptionally keen on the mission [to Hungary] that he had in view."
- ⁷¹ TNA, WO 71/1094, "Further Statement by Ormond Leyton Uren, 25 September 1943."
- ⁷² TNA, KV 2/4470, "Summary of Evidence in the Case of Captain O.L. Uren," 14 October 1943.
- ⁷³ West, *Secret War*, p. 71; West, *The Listener*, 19 November 1981.
- ⁷⁴ Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance*, p. 143.
- ⁷⁵ TNA, HS4/131, Captain O. Uren to Major E.P.F. Boughey, "London or Cairo?" 18 April 1943.
- ⁷⁶ TNA, HS4/131, Uren to Boughey, "Hungarian Operations," 13 October 1942.
- ⁷⁷ TNA, HS4/91, Lieutenant Colonel H.B. Perkins to Uren, 11 July 1943.
- ⁷⁸ TNA, HS 4/91, Uren to Perkins, 12 July 1943.
- ⁷⁹ TNA, HS4/131, Boughey to Lieutenant Colonel J.S.A. Pearson, forwarding a copy of "Contacts in Hungary," 24 November 1942.
- ⁸⁰ TNA, HS4/130, Uren to Boughey, "Contacts in Lisbon," 19 January 1943; TNA, HS4/131, Uren to Boughey, "Hungarians in Lisbon," 18 January 1943, and Uren to Boughey, "Knapp's Father," 23 January 1943; TNA, HS4/95, Uren to Alexander/Andrew Havas, 3 December 1942 and 27 January 1943; and Havas to Uren, 9 March 1943, 20 March 1943, and 29 April 1943; TNA, HS9/14, Uren to "D/CE4," 8 October 1942, "D/CE4" to Uren, 12 October 1942, note by "D/CE4," 20 October 1942, and Uren to Boughey, 23 January 1943.
- ⁸¹ TNA, HS9/14, Uren to Boughey, "Briefing," sent under note dated 23 January 1943.
- ⁸² Uren, *The Listener*, 7 January 1982.
- ⁸³ Uren, *The Times*, 10 November 1981. Uren may not have had the time or opportunity to do more, since he was earmarked for operations into Hungary and was arrested on the eve of leaving for the Middle East preparatory to going into the field. He had volunteered as early as April 1943 to operate in Hungary. TNA, HS 4/131, "Hungary," 22 April 1943. By September, he had been allotted a place on a team to be sent at the earliest opportunity to organize and support resistance and sabotage activities, prepare the way for reinforcements, and establish communication with London and into neighbouring countries. TNA, HS 4/106, "Briefing for Operation SANDY," 25 September 1943. Only MI5's intervention prevented Uren from leaving with the rest of the team. "The party was in good spirits," Harold Perkins informed SOE's chief on the day that the team left London, "and not seriously affected by the last-minute rejection of Captain Uren—the true reason for which only the leader was informed." TNA, HS 4/106, Perkins to Major-General Colin Gubbins, "'SANDY' Operation," 27 September 1943.

⁸⁴ West, *The Listener*, 28 January 1982.

⁸⁵ Uren, letter to the author, 18 April 2002.

⁸⁶ Uren, *The Listener*, 7 January 1982.

⁸⁷ Uren, letter to the author, 18 April 2002.

⁸⁸ TNA, KV2/4471, Perfect to Cussen, 28 October 1943.

⁸⁹ Andrew's remarks accompanied the release of Uren's MI5 file in September 2019. See: <https://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/security-service-file-release-september-2019/> (accessed 1 November 2021).

ORCID

Roderick Bailey  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0055-3460>