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Russian Roulette: How British Spies Thwarted Lenin's Plot for Global Revolution

Giles Milton

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In 1917, a band of communist revolutionaries stormed the Winter Palace of Tsar Nicholas II-a dramatic and explosive act marking that Vladimir Lenin's communist revolution was now underway. But Lenin would not be satisfied with overthrowing the Tsar. His goal was a global revolt that would topple all Western capitalist regimes-starting with the British Empire.

Russian Roulette tells the spectacular and harrowing story of the British spies in revolutionary Russia and their mission to stop Lenin's red tide from washing across the free world. They were an eccentric cast of characters, led by Mansfield Cumming, a one-legged, monocle-wearing former sea captain, and included novelist W. Somerset Maugham, beloved children's author Arthur Ransome, and the dashing, ice-cool Sidney Reilly, the legendary Ace of Spies and a model for Ian Fleming's James Bond. Cumming's network would pioneer the field of covert action and would one day become MI6.

Living in disguise, constantly switching identities, they infiltrated Soviet commissariats, the Red Army, and Cheka (the feared secret police), and would come within a whisker of assassinating Lenin. In a sequence of bold exploits that stretched from Moscow to the central Asian city of Tashkent, this unlikely band of agents succeeded in foiling Lenin's plot for global revolution.

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