



GEOFF ANDREWS

At the Heart of the
Cambridge Spy Circle

**THE
SHADOW
MAN**

'Exciting'

DONALD
SASSOON

I.B. TAURIS

Geoff Andrews is a writer and historian who specialises in the history of political ideas and movements. His previous books include *The Slow Food Story: Politics and Pleasure*; *Not a Normal Country: Italy After Berlusconi* and *Endgames and New Times: The Final Years of British Communism*. He is Senior Lecturer in Politics at The Open University.

‘This quite unapologetic and exciting biography rescues James Klugmann from the condescension of posterity and from those of us who regarded him (mistakenly) as simply a dull British communist apparatchik. By strongly contextualising Klugmann’s life, Geoff Andrews gives us a fuller picture of the man, an unswerving communist, a friend of the Cambridge spies, a recruit of Soviet intelligence, a senior SOE operative (under the nose of MI5), a great supporter of Tito before joining in Stalin’s fatwa, and, yes, also an ultra-loyalist communist hack.’

Donald Sassoon, author of *One Hundred Years of Socialism*

‘Klugmann developed from the brilliant Cambridge undergraduate and student communist into a Stalinist intellectual, willing to denounce his former wartime comrades in the Yugoslav Communist Party. He can be an elusive quarry, and Geoff Andrews has done a fine job in piecing together the story. This fascinating biography illuminates the world of the mid-twentieth-century communist intellectuals: the idealism that motivated them, and the choices that they had to make.’

Tom Buchanan, Professor of Modern British and European History, University of Oxford

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At the Heart of the Cambridge Spy Circle

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Geoff Andrews
Oxford

Note on Intelligence Sources

The release of James Klugmann's Security Service (MI5) files in 2002 has been invaluable in the research for this book, but some further explanation on the use of material from Security Service archives is necessary. MI5 files, including Klugmann's personal files used here, can be incomplete and held back without explanation. Material is normally only released after 50 years and the files themselves are only released after the death of the subject. This means we do not know what other material was held by MI5 on Klugmann beyond the early 1950s. (The relevant Special Operations Executive (SOE) files were released in 1997, though earlier War Office material alluded to some SOE activities). Although Klugmann's influence in the leadership of the Communist Party of Great Britain (often referred to in the following pages as 'the Party' or CPGB) waned from the 1960s, MI5 renewed its interest in him following the public exposure of Kim Philby, their interrogation of Bernard Floud and the interrogation and subsequent negotiations with John Cairncross. Therefore the use of memoirs from both 'sides' – Anthony Blunt's 'Autobiographical Memoir' held at the British Library and Guy Liddell's diaries at The National Archives, for example – interviews and secondary sources were important in building a wider picture of Klugmann's espionage links, assumptions about his role, together with his own fears and actions.

Much of the relevant material from the KGB and Soviet Intelligence archive in Moscow has either not been available for researchers or subject to restricted or intermittent access. I am grateful therefore for the pioneering work carried out by Nigel West with the help of Oleg Tsarev in making public details of KGB/NKVD files held on British agents, which provided evidence of James Klugmann's recruitment by Soviet intelligence and the role he played in the subsequent recruitment of John Cairncross. The material also provides insight on the role of NKVD controller Arnold Deutsch – 'Otto' – and his estimation of Klugmann's work and potential. Christopher Andrew's work in making public material collected by Vasili Mitrokhin, a former employee of the KGB's foreign intelligence archives, has been very helpful too in this regard. The activities of the NKVD, the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs responsible for state security and espionage in the 1930s, were later incorporated into the KGB from 1954.

Notwithstanding the caution needing to be applied in the use of security and intelligence archives, if used judiciously and with context they can be a rich and fertile source for researchers. In the case of James Klugmann, they provide a range of insight into different parts of his life during the Cold War period. The files contain material from telephone checks on his home and at the Communist Party's King Street, Covent Garden offices in central London – as well as transcripts from meetings picked up by hidden microphones placed in the King Street meetings room – copies of mail obtained by Home Office warrant; Special Branch reports written up from public meetings attended by their officers and details of observation provided

by MI5 'watchers'. The first serious interest taken by MI5 in Klugmann's activities occurred during the student delegation he led to China in 1938. Thereafter, the file includes correspondence related to his controversial role in the Special Operations Executive during World War II – including a long and particularly revealing debriefing with CPGB official Bob Stewart that MI5 recorded in August 1945 and the frank exchanges between MI5 and his SOE superiors – and subsequently during the Cold War when he was regarded as a security threat. The disappearance of Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean sparked increased MI5 surveillance, as did other developments concerning the Cambridge spy circle, while his work on behalf of the Party, as its expert on Yugoslavia and Eastern Europe, in contacts with Eastern European embassies, and in his other work in the leadership of the Party, was regularly monitored.

Prologue

On an early spring evening in 1937, two university friends met at the entrance to Regent's Park in London. They were among the most brilliant linguists of their generation and had recently left Cambridge with outstanding prospects. They shared common interests in French and German literature which had sustained their friendship after university. Their left-wing politics had further brought them together in the resistance to the rise of Nazism in Germany, and at a time of acute international political crisis they were both committed to the anti-fascist movement.

John Cairncross was Scottish, slim and engaging, if a little taciturn. He had just taken up a post at the Foreign Office. He was 23 years old. His friend James Klugmann was shorter, Jewish and slightly chubby. He was over on a brief visit from Paris, where he was researching French literature and working for an international student association. He was 25 years old.

On this particular spring evening, as they made their way towards a more secluded part of the park, Klugmann's demure wit, avuncular personality and political enthusiasms were absent. An awkward few minutes of uneasy pleasantries came to an end as another figure stepped forward from the trees and Klugmann, after introducing him to his younger friend, promptly made his excuses and slipped away into the shadows. Cairncross and Klugmann would not meet again for 30 years, both their friendship and their own futures tainted by the consequences of those few minutes in Regent's Park. The visitor was Arnold Deutsch, introduced by his code name 'Otto', who in the same park three years earlier had recruited Kim Philby to Soviet intelligence.

For Cairncross, whose attraction to communism did not last beyond Cambridge and who had never taken out a Party membership card, the meeting meant the beginning of an espionage career he had not sought and did not expect to be thrust upon him. For Klugmann, another reluctant spy, who had already decided to dedicate his life to communism, this untimely and distasteful rendezvous had been ordered by the British Communist Party leadership. His friendship with Cairncross and his growing reputation in the communist movement – it was the Communist International (Comintern) in Moscow which funded his role as leader of the World Student Association – meant that he was the only one who could deliver the young Foreign Office official to Soviet intelligence.

Klugmann and Cairncross were of a political generation that had an unrivalled certainty about the impending international crisis facing the world and the necessary sacrifices needed in order to change it. They and many like them had little faith in Britain's old and decaying order and were contemptuous of its feeble opposition to the rise of Nazism, while at the same time they were inspired by growing internationalism in Spain, France and elsewhere.

Indeed, it was through their dedication to the cause of international anti-fascism that these

men justified the main acts of ‘treachery’ for which they have subsequently been condemned. In Cairncross’s case, this amounted to passing Enigma decrypts of German military activities to Russia in the lead-up to the battle of Kursk in 1943: the most significant of a range of secret documents he gave to the Soviets. For Klugmann, it was the manipulation of documents to exaggerate Yugoslav partisan strengths in order to win Allied support in the same period.

Conventional accounts of the Cambridge spy circle often depreciate the historical context, the motives behind their actions and the scale of the international crisis, in favour of more sensationalist accounts of treachery and betrayal, personality traits and sexual deviance – ‘Spies, Lies, Buggery and Betrayal’, as the subtitle of one such work put it. In the race to name the ‘fourth man’ or ‘fifth man’ – both labels were attributed to Cairncross and Klugmann at different times – contexts and complexities were the first casualties. James Klugmann’s role, for example, as the ‘shadowy’ figure in the background, is normally attributed to a dual personality. The amiable intellectual, whose gentle elucidation of the Marxist tenets and prognosis of the inevitability of revolution were delivered in soft words to innocent acolytes, had a ‘sinister’ darker side, in the view of Chapman Pincher and others.

Many labour and left historians, however, have largely treated the whole question of Soviet espionage with either contempt or ambivalence. For some, the very suggestion that James Klugmann, a much-loved figure in the Party, could be involved in espionage was an insult and the outcome of conspiracy theories. For others, the whole business of espionage was too sensitive for serious examination. With the exception of the work of the historians Victor Kiernan and Eric Hobsbawm, two of Klugmann’s Cambridge near contemporaries, there has been little attempt to explain the political allegiances of the 1930s which gave rise to the choices, compromises and constraints of those who found themselves in his position. Here too, the wider context of Klugmann’s remarkable life has remained closed. It is an irony that Klugmann was someone who epitomised for a brief period in his middle age the features of the classic Cold War intellectual, yet his own story has been suppressed by Cold War assumptions.

Following the wider availability of archives and the erosion of Cold War polarities, it is no longer possible to omit the question of espionage from the wider history of that period. Rather, the commitments, sacrifices, international contexts and ultimately consequences faced by Klugmann’s generation of communists need more exploration. His was a twentieth-century political life shaped in many ways by the hopes and fears of the 1930s, and one which helps illuminate the defining moments in the wider history of the left.

A brilliant pupil who excelled at an early age and won all the prizes at Gresham’s School, an outstanding Cambridge student destined – according to his professors and peers – for an academic career, Klugmann eschewed personal ambitions and put his immense intellectual talents at the service of the Communist Party. This was not a unique decision, given the ultimate sacrifices made by his close friends John Cornford and David Guest who died in the Spanish Civil War. However, for him it meant a lifelong commitment as a communist intellectual. At its peak it took him from talent-spotting at Cambridge to leading the international student movement in Paris and a unique role in the Special Operations Executive (SOE) with its origins in the ‘boat university’ he set up en route to Cairo and culminated with

his sermons to exiled Croatian communists as they prepared for dangerous assignments. He was a brilliant teacher, and a lucid and eloquent exponent of Marxism and the Communist Party's policy; the hopes he invested in the future drove his lecturing, writing and research.

As the leading communist student of his generation Klugmann found himself both intellectual mentor to his Cambridge comrades and sought after by the Comintern. It was the combination of these two realities, at a time of more tenuous political loyalties, that dragged him briefly – and reluctantly – into the espionage world, an experience that would haunt him for the rest of his life.

His commitment came with severe costs for his personal and political allegiances. As a 'Cold War' intellectual whose loyalties to Moscow shaped many of his political judgements in the early 1950s, he was obliged to meet intelligence agents and Eastern European embassy officials at the time he himself was being pursued by British intelligence, following the disappearance of his friends Guy Burgess and Donald Maclean. In 1956, a year of turbulent and tumultuous events in the communist world, he was found wanting by those who had considered him their 'intellectual guru' in earlier years and now looked to him for leadership. Instead, he put his loyalty to the Party before his better judgement and for a while reverted to what for him was the unenviable role of the Communist Party functionary. The expert on Yugoslav communism and friend of Tito and the partisans was required by his party – under pressure from Moscow – to denounce his former ally, which he achieved through a very disingenuous work, *From Trotsky to Tito*.

His intellectual insecurity was also shaped by internal private conflicts. Released from some of the immediate duties of a Party functionary, he spent much of the last two decades of his life organising the Marxist–Christian dialogue, editing *Marxism Today* and writing the first two volumes of the official history of the Communist Party. The Marxist–Christian dialogue, which developed into a prominent public debate covering many meetings and publications, was also, in retrospect, an act of catharsis and reparation on his part. It enabled him to rediscover the humanism which had brought him to communism in the first place, and privately to reassess his earlier actions.

Klugmann could not, however, realise his earlier intellectual promise, and his well-researched volumes of the Party's early history tell us more about his later life as a Party functionary, as he avoided the contentious areas. Although he had spent two decades on the work, it is now difficult to believe that he would have been able to complete the subsequent volumes which concerned the years he was himself in the Party. His own story reflects the wider hopes and fears of the Party to which he had dedicated his life. As a communist intellectual who had been a leading participant in some of its most defining and difficult moments, he was ultimately unable to extract himself from these conflicts of loyalties.

Ultimately, it was his loyalty to the Party, as a 'good Jesuit' who espoused the cause to all who would listen but whose vows of obedience curtailed his intellectual energies, that compounded his wider dilemmas. A deeply private man, modest and quiet by nature, Klugmann's Party became his family and communism his religion. Estranged from most of his relatives –though influenced by his elder sister Kitty, who became a communist before him –

his devotion to the cause took precedence over his private life. His own sexuality – he was thought by most to be homosexual without anyone knowing of any relationships – was repressed at an early stage, seemingly because of his fear of the implications it would have for the Party's image. His Jewish identity was also subordinate to the Party line, which put all human emancipation first and retained the illusion, long after critics had exposed it to be otherwise, that the Jewish community was prospering in the Soviet Union. Even his love of book-collecting, his only other passion beyond the Party, was itself, as he told a BBC Radio 4 interviewer near the end of his life, driven by his desire to serve the working-class movement.

These hopes and fears partly explain the wider mystery of Klugmann's life. The intensity, courage and spirit of adventure that marked his early years as a revolutionary contrasted sharply with the compromised, timid and often lonely figure he appeared to be later. No wonder that many later communists reduced his significance to that of the editor of *Marxism Today* and as the Party's official historian. Even his entry in the Dictionary of National Biography, written by one of his Cambridge contemporaries, erroneously attributes him with two older brothers. 'What did one know about him?' Eric Hobsbawm, who knew him better than most, has written. 'He gave nothing away.'¹

Hampstead: Bourgeois Beginnings

James Klugmann's impeccable bourgeois background has been remarked on by several commentators attentive to the ironies in the origins of communist intellectuals. He himself often seemed apologetic about his prosperous family circumstances when in the company of fellow communists. Yet, his affluent Jewish background in Hampstead belies the resolute determination of his father to be accepted by the British liberal establishment. Samuel Klugmann was born in 1868 in Wiesenbronn, Bavaria, the son of Nathan and Caroline Klugmann, from a family of merchants. Samuel followed his elder brother Felix to Britain in 1891 to help establish the family business, finding residence initially at St George's, in Bloomsbury, London, where he first lived as a boarder while waiting for his naturalisation certificate. Finally, in June 1894 he was given the news that he was now a naturalised Briton, by which time he was a resident in Richmond, south-west London. After naturalisation he and his brother Felix established Klugmann and Co., 'Rope and Twine Merchants', in Basinghall Street in the City of London. His pledge to the then home secretary, Herbert Henry Asquith, to 'be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Victoria, her heirs and successors, according to law' may have amused his son later. However, Samuel's allegiance to Asquith's liberalism would become a serious one, enabling him to embrace the values of his adopted country and influence the upbringing of his family, including the choices he made on their behalf.

We do not know when Samuel first met Anna Browne ('Cissie') Rosenheim, James Klugmann's mother, but it is likely that their families knew each other through prosperous German Jewish business circles. It was certainly a good marriage for Samuel. Cissie was part of the large and expansive Rosenheim family with its modern origins in the wine merchants established by Loeb Rosenheim in Heidingsfeld, in the late eighteenth century. Her more recent relatives had left Würzburg in the mid-nineteenth century so that by the time she was born in 1884, the only girl of the Rosenheim's four children, her family was already settled in the Belsize Park area of Hampstead, north-west London. Her father William, together with one of his brothers, Theodore, had set up a tea and coffee trading business, with investments in Foochow Teas in China, while his other two brothers continued in the wine trade. The family household in 8 Belsize Grove, where she was brought up, was large: in addition to the four children, the family employed three servants.

Samuel and Cissie were married at St John's Wood Synagogue in October 1904, an orthodox place of worship with liberal inclinations, and moved into 27 Lancaster Road, Belsize Park, shortly after. Lancaster Road had been developed in the 1870s and its large houses were ideal for prosperous businessmen and their house-proud spouses. Samuel's brother Felix, who was head of the family firm, and his wife Eugenie ('Jenny') were their next-door neighbours at

number 25 and Jenny's mother, Mrs Bechman, was on the other side at number 29. Both Felix and Samuel were able to employ three servants and to stock their large drawing rooms with lavish 'Germanic' furnishings. Other members of the Rosenheim family had houses in Belsize Grove and Belsize Park Gardens, and it must have been a very comfortable environment to bring up children, enhanced by a close-knit family and a thriving Jewish community.

For Samuel Klugmann, it provided the opportunity to integrate seamlessly into the middle-class world. It was very distant from the experiences of working-class Jews growing up in the harsh conditions of London's East End, just a few miles away. Anti-fascist activism there in the 1930s would become one of the Communist Party's main causes, and its leading cadres some of Klugmann's closest friends. The nearest contact the Klugmanns and Rosenheims had with East End Jews would have been through the work of the Sick Room Help Society in supporting the welfare of the 'East End poor', to which the Klugmann and Rosenheim wives contributed. Family life would have had little need to go much beyond Belsize Park, save for occasional holidays to relatives in Germany. The community was flourishing by the time Kitty Karoline, James's elder sister, was born in 1908. She already had two older cousins next door – Frank Norman and John Donald – and other relatives nearby. The expansion of the area had brought new houses for successful businessmen and the Belsize Park underground station had been built the year before to take its inhabitants to the West End, while the John Barnes department store on nearby Finchley Road would also cater for the needs of the rising middle classes. By the time Norman John Klugmann was born in 1912, the family was well established and Samuel Klugmann must have been content with his hard-earned position. He seems to have become 'James' at some point during his time at Gresham's School, but he was 'Norman' to his family through much of his childhood, the name fitting comfortably with the Klugmanns' pursuit of anglicised respectability.

Prosperous cigar-smoking businessmen, however, were not the only sign of up-and-coming Hampstead at this time. Their neighbours included composers and writers, doctors, booksellers and architects, with even some early signs of bohemia. Nestled between the Rosenheim aunts, uncles and cousins at 18, 68, and 72 Belsize Park Gardens nearby – Klugmann's grandmother Martha would later move to number 89 – Lytton Strachey's family made their home in two separate houses, moving first in 1907 to number 67, a 'spacious, dilapidated house', and later to number 6.¹ Though Strachey was initially excited by his new 'bijou' Hampstead residence, he soon grew restless with the 'ghastly solitude' of Belsize Park Gardens and its 'hole-and-corner, one-place-at-table-laid-for-six life'.² Instead he sought frequent 'psychological escapes' to town to meet Ottoline Morrell, John Maynard Keynes and his cousin, and sometime lover, the artist Duncan Grant, in what became some of the defining moments in the history of the Bloomsbury group.³

This early bohemianism in Edwardian Hampstead was some way from the more politically committed writers, exiled communists and Jewish refugees who would congregate there in the 1930s, never mind the Belsize Park communists of the 1940s and 1950s who were a big influence on the left-wing historian Raphael Samuel. But it did offer new attitudes and outlooks for those who were open to them, and intellectuals, particularly in Hampstead's northern parts,

were growing in number and influence. James Klugmann would find another way of ‘cutting free’ from both the restraints of bourgeois Hampstead and family pressures, but for his father, in the years before and after World War I, assimilation into the respectable world of the British middle class was of paramount importance. There was still a sense of fear and insecurity for Jews recently arrived in Britain. A cousin of Klugmann’s mother anglicised his name – not an uncommon practice at the time – from Rosenheim to Ross in order to join the Royal Welsh Fusiliers in 1914. Later, his aunt ‘Jenny’ Klugmann (wife of Felix) and her sons would change their name by deed poll, removing the final ‘n’ from their surnames as World War II approached. A visitor to the Klugmanns’, just after World War I, recalled a household ‘barred against intruders more rigorously than any house I had ever known’.⁴

Nevertheless, Samuel Klugmann’s politics were liberal by inclination. He voted for the British Liberal Party nearly all his life, only altering his choice in the fateful 1931 election in which the Labour Party suffered its worst ever electoral performance but its former leader Ramsay MacDonald, backed by the overwhelming Conservative majority, remained prime minister of the National Government. In 1931 Samuel Klugmann voted Labour for the one and only time. (‘It did him no good’, his son later remarked.) His liberalism was rooted in the idea of self-improvement and individual responsibility, of wanting to get on and improve yourself while providing for your family. Although his liberalism would not have encompassed Lytton Strachey’s bohemianism, Samuel Klugmann was clearly open to new ideas and saw the extension of knowledge as the key to the successful futures for his two children. At the same time, it was a liberalism which sought a wider civic duty, to use the advantages of privilege to aid the common good. In all of these values, education was taken very seriously. He could not have envisaged the impact that education and the opening up of new horizons would have for the futures of his children.

The Klugmanns did not have to look beyond the Belsize Park enclave for the kind of progressive liberal education they were seeking, though in Kitty’s case it almost arrived by accident. After an early kindergarten, divided informally between parents in the surrounding streets, as was the custom at the time, in 1916 Kitty Klugmann enrolled at a school at the end of Lancaster Road, only a few minutes’ walk away. Kingsley School, at 46 Belsize Park, had been established in 1890 ‘For the Daughters of Gentlemen and Doctors’, which would surely have impressed Samuel Klugmann. The year before Kitty enrolled at the school, it had been taken over by four women; the philosopher Susan Stebbing, her sister Helen and two colleagues, Hilda Gavin, her former Girton College contemporary, and her friend Vivian Shepherd. The women lived together in Kingsley Lodge at number 26 Belsize Park, with Gavin taking on the role of headmistress, Shepherd teaching Maths and Music, Susan Stebbing teaching two courses in Logic and Ethics and Principles of Criticism, and Helen Stebbing taking classes on Art and Sewing. At the time, Susan Stebbing was also teaching Philosophy at Bedford College, at the beginning of a career which would see her become the first British woman Professor of Philosophy. In the austere years of World War I and at the moment of the women’s suffrage movement, she was committed to providing a broad-based education for girls who were serious about studying, even if it meant breaking with some taboos and

conventions.

It was not a large school and could not compete with its more established and prestigious neighbour, South Hampstead School for Girls, in meeting the aspirations of ambitious Hampstead parents (and where Margot Heinemann, who would become one of Klugmann's closest friends, was briefly a pupil), but it made up for it through its greater social mix and founding ethos, both of which elicited from the girls a strong loyalty and identity. About 100 pupils, mostly day boarders (and approximately one third from Jewish backgrounds), dressed in their maroon and white blazers, packed into number 46 each day for their lessons. Linda Rittenberg, a former Kingsley pupil, who started at the school just as Kitty was leaving, recalled the

smelly plimsolls in the basement cloakroom mixing with delicious odours from the 'domestic science' class in the kitchen area [...] Then up through numerous levels, coal-burning classrooms, sulphurous smells on the top-floor where chemistry consisted of bunsen burners, pipettes, scales and flasks under a secure slate roof, so everyone hoped, and where the atom was still an invisible particle, or so we were told.⁵

It was Susan Stebbing's classes which caught the imagination and would have a lasting influence on Kitty, providing her with the tools to look at the world with a critical eye. It was under Stebbing's influence that she went on to study Philosophy (Moral Sciences) at Girton College, Cambridge, while at the same time it opened up wider horizons. 'Hers was a rigorous introduction to logic, ethics, principles of criticism, and clear thinking,' Linda Rittenberg remembered. 'She taught us *how* to think, not *what* to think.'⁶

Linda Rittenberg's mother was not happy with her daughter studying Logic, which she thought would make her too argumentative and scare off potential suitors, and it is possible that Cissie Klugmann, had she ventured out of her domestic and community obligations, would have responded similarly; the need to find a good marriage for their daughters was still high in the aspirations of the wives of Jewish businessmen. Cissie Klugmann was a caring, perhaps doting mother who would grow to be proud of her two children's academic success in the years that followed, without beginning to understand much about their politics.

Stebbing's classes were challenging: debunking myths and demanding facts in support of arguments and cutting through the rhetoric of politicians and newspaper columnists to bring world affairs to the girls' attention. She would later argue in her classic book on philosophy, *Thinking to Some Purpose*, that electors needed to be able to evaluate evidence before making political choices. The problem with many politicians, she argued, was that they used the methods of 'rational persuasion', 'with a client or policy to defend [...] seeking to make a favourable impression', rather than 'rational argument' based on facts.⁷

It is likely that some of the examples she draws on in her writing may first have been discussed with her girls at Kingsley. The assumption held by some that 'all pacifists are cowardly', a recurring debate during Kitty's first years at the school, could easily be challenged, Stebbing pointed out, by 'much evidence to the contrary'; the testimonies of many conscientious objectors suggested that they were acting out of principle.⁸ Kitty's last year at the

school was 1926, the year of the General Strike, and Stebbing, whose sympathies lay broadly with the strikers, was not impressed with the newspapers' view that the strike was 'aimed at the whole community' and threatened 'the liberties of the people of these islands'. Her response would have stirred Kitty. 'Are not the strikers, we may well ask, to be included among the people of these islands? Do they not belong to the "community"?'⁹

Kingsley pupils were not given a narrow or dogmatic political education. Rather, it was a small school with high principles, and with the shadow of World War I hanging over Kitty's Kingsley years, pupils were introduced to the League of Nations, asked to evaluate the prospects for peace, acquainted with women's suffrage and offered a critical history of the empire. There was much fun too, with hobbies, clubs and sports available despite the cramped surroundings. They were encouraged to look beyond their immediate environment and were taken on visits to art galleries, as well as summer camps in Gloucestershire and Cornwall. Later, as the threat of fascism increased, Stebbing and her colleagues provided homes and education for refugees fleeing Nazism. Stebbing did not always suffer fools gladly, occasionally dismissing her more trying pupils as 'mindless blobs of protoplasm'; she was unimpressed by cinema and the emerging mass culture and saw important civic and democratic values threatened by superficiality. She had a particular disdain for Selfridges' claim that it was 'the finest store ever dedicated to the service of man'.¹⁰

This critical outlook towards the modern world had a lasting influence on Kitty. The breadth of experience she enjoyed at Kingsley opened her eyes to many new passions, including art, literature and history. It also introduced her in a roundabout way to communism. Felicia Browne, a few years ahead of Kitty, was a talented art student who would later join the Communist Party and go to fight on the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War, where she would be the first British casualty, in August 1936. In a small school it was likely that the two girls knew each other, with avant-garde art being another of Kitty's early interests, and they may well have shared interests under the watchful attention of art teacher Helen Stebbing. More direct influence came from another of her teachers, Miss Beauchamp. Already a communist by this point, Kay Beauchamp, who would later be jailed for her beliefs and then rise to be a leading figure in the Communist Party's International Department, taught history, including the history of the empire. On Kitty's death, nearly 50 years later, Beauchamp would tell James Klugmann that Kitty had said that it was her Kingsley classes that set her on the road to communism. In the short term, however, it was philosophy that was Kitty's abiding passion, and after excellent examination results she won a scholarship to Stebbing's old Cambridge college, Girton, to read Moral Sciences. This was not a regular occurrence at Kingsley and the whole school cheered at the news.

Directly opposite Kingsley School, on the corner of Buckland Crescent, was a flourishing boys' prep school which was to provide Norman Klugmann with his first taste of education. It was not only the location of The Hall that must have appealed to Samuel Klugmann. The Hall has its origins in the Belsize School set up in 1889 by F.J. Wrottersley, an assistant clergyman in nearby Hampstead churches, who was looking for somewhere to educate his three sons according to his high 'classicist' principles and educational philosophy. Though his sons'

education prospered, numbers at his school remained tiny and when he sold up in 1898 the school was purchased by another clergyman – and another classicist – the Reverend Douglas Hamilton Marshall, whose strict Victorian ethos ensured effective teaching and organisation and rising numbers, which enabled the school to expand to new premises in nearby Crossfield Road in 1905, when it took its new name. Marshall left in 1909 to start a prep school in Brighton, but the arrival of his successor, E.H. Montauban, formerly headmaster of a school in Ramsgate, marked a decisive moment in the school's history. Montauban ('Monty'), a devoted and popular, if unorthodox teacher, expanded the school buildings and playing fields, including the site in Buckland Crescent and presided over the school during World War I, even offering temporary war-time accommodation at his place in Caversham, in Berkshire. An inspirational educationalist, he gave up the headship in 1919 (though he continued teaching at the junior school until 1923) to help found Stowe School, in Buckinghamshire.¹¹

By the time that Norman Klugmann joined the school in 1919, its reputation as a modern liberal establishment had risen among the aspirant well-to-do Hampstead parents. The new headmaster, Robin Gladstone, ran the school with his sister and was joined in partnership by his uncle, Gerard Wathen, in 1924. They brought further reorganisation and expansion, with sport, literary and cultural activities given strong prominence. The seven years Klugmann spent at The Hall were happy ones, marked by his outstanding academic potential together with the development of his personality as a clever, playful, modest and genial friend.

The school had a high intake of Jewish pupils and was seen as exceptionally tolerant in attitudes, ethos and teaching methods. Robin Gladstone, a very large man with a loud voice, 'whose bark was worse than his bite', took a particular interest in sport, notably rugby and squash, while Gerard ('Dub') Wathen taught French, English and Literature. Former pupils recalled the impact of Wathen's 'revolutionary ideas', including the so-called 'Dalton plan', which allowed free periods on afternoons deemed too wet for games, and a general broadening of the school curriculum. Wathen was quick to defend the school's principles – 'We are always fighting against anything that tends to make education narrow' – and was admired by at least one public school head for offering a 'liberal and refreshing' approach and being in the 'vanguard of educational reform'.¹²

Klugmann thrived in this environment, was an outstanding pupil and took full advantage of the opportunities it afforded for pursuing creative interests. School records show him consistently at the top of his class and as a pupil who willingly took part in a range of school activities. This extended beyond the confines of Belsize Park. On Tuesdays and Fridays, the boys could go to the swimming baths on Finchley Road, a busy London thoroughfare also popular for visits to the toy shop or Stewarts for buns and cakes. For school recreation, there were exciting journeys on the Metropolitan Line underground from Finchley Road station to Selfridge's Sports Ground at Preston Road, near the new Wembley Stadium.¹³

It was at The Hall School that Klugmann developed what would be a lifelong interest in chess, influenced by the eccentric but inspiring Maths tutor, W.H. Copinger. Of conservative political opinions, but with an enlightened attitude to learning, Copinger was passionate about chess and would encourage the boys to take part in lunchtime matches, often moving between

tables to participate in simultaneous games himself. According to *The Hall Magazine*, Klugmann, representing the Purple House, was: ‘A silent type of player who greedily snatches his opponents’ pieces. His adversaries find his little sighs (in more senses than one) not a little disconcerting.’¹⁴

Klugmann undoubtedly benefited from the liberal philosophy and tolerant atmosphere of the school. His outstanding academic performance was helped by the expansion of the school library, which stocked a rich variety of subjects and over 1,000 books on art, adventure, school tales, biography, classics, fairy tales and poetry. It was here that he first developed his love of books. As his literary interests flourished, it is likely his family would have enjoyed his minor role as Salerio in a school production of *The Merchant of Venice* – notwithstanding its depiction of anti-Semitism and the Catholic church venue – which played to a packed audience at nearby St Peter’s Church in Belsize Square in 1925.

He also took an interest in poetry, the first route into politics for many of his generation. His poem ‘On the Lower Fourth Debating Society’ reveals the observations of a 14-year-old on the precocity of his classmates and their naivety in setting out early political opinions on the issues of the day, including the General Strike of that pivotal year, 1926.

A very small boy
With a very large head,
Proceeds to deliver
On what he has read;
A speech very long
He quotes very often
From Byron and Tennyson,
Milton and Emerson,
But sad to relate
His quotations are wrong.
A diminutive child
Then steps out to speak
On the strike. And he talks
Of the T.U.C’s cheek
In calling a strike –
Mr. Baldwin he says,
Is the only Prime Minister.
He is not sinister.
But Ramsay Macdonald
He never would like.
A minute baby infant
Advances and squeaks,
That in Mars, he believes
Live some leopards with beaks,
And he furthermore states,

With an air of great knowledge,
That they only eat Keatings,
And have Mothers' Meetings,
And much to their hatred
Have lessons at college.
My dear little babies,
Before you spout forth
On aeroplanes, ostriches,
Stamps and the North,
If you take my advice,
You will thoroughly learn
Both your measures and weights
And all history dates.
And then I am sure
Some marks you will earn.¹⁵

The General Strike dominated Klugmann's last term at The Hall, which was also Kitty's last term at Kingsley. Kitty was now engrossed in her studies and drawn to radical politics. She would remain a significant political influence on her brother, and as they made the short walk to school during that summer the strike would have been a topic of conversation. Ramsay MacDonald, who had lived in nearby Howitt Road until the previous year, would become a contentious figure for both over the next few years, while the strike itself would be the subject of one of Klugmann's later history books. It is likely that their discussion of the strike, together with Kitty's growing political awareness, were the first causes of family disagreements, which would intensify over the next few years.

The strike itself caused some disruption to the day-to-day running of The Hall, though with most staff and pupils living nearby, it had less impact than it did elsewhere. The lack of coal, however, did have an effect, 'for the baths were not warmed until the last week or so of term, with the consequence that bathing was sadly limited and the annual swimming display could not be held'.¹⁶ Perhaps more disappointingly, from the boys' point of view, was that they were deprived of Mrs Mildred's ices for the entire summer term.

Despite these constraints, Klugmann enjoyed an immensely happy final term at The Hall. With his cousin Charles Rosenheim he founded and edited a small school newspaper, *The Upper Sixth Former*, whose motto was 'Justus Omnibus'. It was the first tentative introduction to journalism for the future editor of *World News and Views* and *Marxism Today*, and he and Charles showed some awareness of the wider political world in a section on 'International Upheavals', though this was often limited to schoolboy jokes. The first editorial declared that 'we propose to issue this paper weekly, gratis [...] All contributions must be handed in to the editor by Thursday 6.0pm.' As well as editor, Klugmann was the main writer, contributing poems on the 'greedy tale' of 'Percival Archibald Edgar Snell' and on his experiences on the cricket field:

The languid longstop spends his hours
In taking sleeps and picking flowers.¹⁷

Klugmann and Charles also contributed entertaining instalments of the escapades of the detective duo Hammond Eggs and Roland Buter, inserted cricket reports, spoof ads and a not altogether sympathetic comment on the departed French master Major Drake-Brockman. The paper was widely admired by the teachers and reveals its editor to have been a popular, witty and engaging fellow among his peers, well on the way to a successful academic career. Wathen's son Mark was a school contemporary who knew Klugmann well and 'always rather admired him for his cleverness'.¹⁸

During that last term Klugmann excelled in his academic studies, confirmed by his final report in 1926, which was exceptional, in length and praise, while providing some insight into his character and attitude.

Klugman is by nature the most modest of boys and would be wretched to hear his praises too loudly sung, but we cannot refrain from saying he is one of the cleverest boys we have ever had at The Hall, that his scholarship was not at all a surprise to those who knew his capabilities and that he is sure to distinguish himself in later life. His contributions to the Upper Sixth weekly were delicious, and showed that like so many quiet folk, very little escaped him. We wish him happiness and recognition in his school life.¹⁹

Klugmann's performance won him a scholarship to Gresham's School in Holt, Norfolk (Rosenheim won a scholarship to Shrewsbury). He did not forget his prep school, nor in the years after did it forget him, though the staff and pupils might have been surprised by the manner in which he would 'distinguish himself in later life'. In 1928 he attended an Old Boys' dinner at the fashionable Café Monico in the West End, presided over by Mr Wathen, who recalled his 'literary contribution' to *The Upper Sixth Former*.²⁰

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