

### Fuchs on Ben Macintyre

It was amusing to see Macintyre defending me in the *Times* on July 28, 2023:

‘By helping the USSR to build the bomb, Fuchs also helped to forge the nuclear balance of power.... Fuchs and the other atomic spies enabled Moscow to keep nuclear pace with the West, maintaining a fragile peace. As the father of the atomic bomb, Oppenheimer made the world markedly less secure. Fuchs, paradoxically, made it safer.’

Thus, probably inadvertently, recycling Soviet propaganda, Macintyre rather leaves aside the tedium of what happened. When there was no nuclear balance of power as Macintyre puts it, the Americans did not use the atom bomb to help their Nationalist Chinese allies in the Chinese Civil War. Similarly, American possession of the bomb did not deter the Soviets from trying to intimidate the West during the Berlin Crisis of 1948-9. In turn, the Soviet atomic bomb test in August 1949 encouraged Stalin to egg on Kim Il-Sung to attack South Korea, contrasting to his earlier caution.

The Soviet move also spurred American work on the hydrogen bomb, which was termed the superbomb. This was first tested on 1 November 1952, producing an explosive yield of ten megatons (compared to the 13.5 kilotons of TNT equivalent for the bomb dropped on Hiroshima).

Macintyre also ignores delivery systems. Prior to the development of intercontinental missiles, the Soviet Union was far more vulnerable to attack, as it lacked the carriers able to carry jet-bombers with atomic bombs, as well as nearby bases for strategic bombers such as those in East Anglia.

With his simply phrase about a nuclear balance of power, Macintyre does not consider how this opened up Western vulnerability to Communist-bloc conventional forces, and, in nuclear terms, made a first-strike nuclear attack more likely.

The Soviet acquisition of nuclear armaments added greatly to the danger of the Cold War, made its escalation more possible and, in the meanwhile, helped consolidate Soviet control in Eastern Europe, as with the suppression of the Hungarian rising in 1956.

Macintyre either knows this but has chosen journalistic glibness or shows a surprising ignorance of nuclear strategy and the Cold War.

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