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## **Reliability of Soviet defector's allegations is open to question**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

From Mr David N. Gibbs..

Sir, You carry a positive review of the most recent publication emanating from the notebooks of the Soviet defector, Vasili Mitrokhin ("The KGB's hidden hand in terrorism", FT Weekend, December 23-24).

The review accepts as fact Mitrokhin's claims about KGB practices during the cold war, including his detailed allegations of Soviet complicity with international terrorist groups.

Among professional historians there are serious questions about the reliability of this source. A review in the American Historical Review of April 2001 on the first published instalment from Mr Mitrokhin's materials says: "Mitrokhin was a self-described loner with increasingly anti-Soviet views . . . Maybe such a potentially dubious type (in KGB terms) really was able freely to transcribe thousands of documents, smuggle them out of KGB premises, hide them under his bed, transfer them to his country house, bury them in milk cans, make multiple visits to British embassies abroad, escape to Britain, and then return to Russia, and carry the voluminous work to the west, all without detection by the KGB . . . It may all be true. But how do we know?"

In the light of these comments, readers should regard The Mitrokhin Archive II with a measure of scepticism.

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