

**Friday 24 August 2012  
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**Scientist spies with family ties:  
Paul Broda speaks to Tam Dalyell  
at the Edinburgh International Book Festival**

Paul Broda is a man with a particularly fascinating family history. Speaking to Tam Dalyell at the Edinburgh International Book Festival yesterday, he unleashed an impassioned and personal account of the captivating story of his father and stepfather, who both independently and for no financial gain, submitted British secrets about atomic weapons to the Russians during the Second World War.

Broda's Austrian father Engelbert Broda – affectionately known as Bertie – was an exceptional chemist and a “cradle communist”, an idealist who had been arrested in Germany, Russia and his native Austria for his beliefs and political activities. After escaping to England in 1940 with his wife Hilde, Bertie's knowledge of physical-chemistry soon secured him a job working on the top-secret Atom Project. However it wasn't until 2009, when Broda finally gained access to reports from Russian archives that he discovered that, as MI5 had suspected, Bertie had been providing intelligence to the Russians about the Atom Bomb.

Alan Nunn May, who was to become Broda's stepfather in 1953, was, like Bertie, a member of the Communist Party. As an expert physicist he also worked on a project to create a nuclear weapon. But after being “handed a report” which suggested that Germany was intending to develop a “dirty bomb” to use on Russia's so-called “Untermenschen”, Nunn May was disgusted to find that Britain was not prepared to share this new-found intelligence with their then-Allies Russia and the report found its way into the Russians' hands.

But despite the treason seemingly committed by both father and stepfather, Broda argues that their motivations came with the purest of intentions, and that they both “stuck to their convictions”: “Scientists are faithful to science, but they are also human beings; if they have informed information about something of importance they should act upon that”. Neither man believed that nuclear weapons

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should be used on people, Nunn May particularly “bitterly regretted having been involved in the Atom Project itself”. Indeed, the intelligence passed over to the Russians, Broda argued, may have just prevented a nuclear holocaust by causing a “stalemate” – dramatically decreasing the risk of a “pre-emptive strike” during the Cold War. But, said Broda, “I’ll leave it up to you to decide... what would you have done?”

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