OBITUARIES

Sam Cummings

The world's largest arms dealer, who bought guns for the CIA, sold rifles to Castro, liked Trujillo and boasted that he could arm half a million men

SAM CUMMINGS, who has died aged 71, was the world's largest private arms dealer; he sold more weapons than any other individual in history and in the 1980s was turning over $100 million a year.

His boast was that he could arm, at short notice, half a million men. His stock-in-trade was not jets and tanks but small arms, the bread-and-butter of the world's little wars. He did not compete with multi-national companies, but governments were his clients and he was a friend of Fidel Castro, Franco and the Shah.

Cummings sold weapons openly and tried to make his goods sound as mundane as sausages. The sale of arms was, he said, not a moral issue. He merely supplied guns, not their use, and held he had no more association with death than did the makers of the car in which Kennedy was killed.

Samuel Cummings was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on February 7 1927. He was of Irish descent, his grandfather having emigrated and then made a fortune selling bottled water.

Young Sam grew up in comfort until his father was ruined in the stock market crash of 1929. Sam's father had never worked for a living and the strain of holding down a job soon killed him.

Sam and his sister (who later married Senator John Tower) were brought up by their mother, who made ends meet by doing up and selling houses. The family moved home 50 times in 10 years, but it paid for Sam's education.

He acquired his first weapon at the age of five. A neighbour gave him, as a toy, an old Maxim machinegun. Sam was soon stripping it down and reassembling it with an enthusiasm other children reserved for tricycles. By the age of 18, he had a collection of 50 guns and was an expert shot.

He then took a degree in political science and trained as a lawyer. After serving briefly in the US Army, in 1948 he spent a term at Queen's College, Oxford, before travelling around Europe. There he first discovered the enormous amounts of surplus weaponry awash on the Continent after the war, much of it simply stockpiled in fields.

Sam Cummings at work in his Manchester office in 1961, with rifles on show in the window

On the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Cummings joined the CIA as an expert on foreign weapons. He was sent back to Europe, posing as the producer of a war film, to buy up the surplus arms he had seen. The CIA intended to recycle them to Chiang Kai-shek, hoping he would invade China from Taiwan and so distract the Chinese forces fighting UN troops in Korea.

Cummings's shopping trip acted as his arms-dealing apprenticeship. Although he then served with the CIA in Central America, the spy's life was not for him, and he left the CIA in 1952. He later denied rumours that he retained links with them, acting as a conduit for arms, but he mischievously named one company Cummings Investment Associates.

Cummings founded his business, Interarms, in 1953, aged 26. By 1960 it was the largest arms-dealing firm in the world. The keys to its success were his brilliance as a salesman and his exploitation of history. He made his first millions by buying weapons that were redundant in Europe and shipping them to places where they were not — the newly independent states of Africa, Latin America and the Far East.

His early successes were in Central America. Cummings's first deal was in Panama, where he bought 7,000 rifles and sold them at a profit of $20,000. Soon he was on good terms with the Dominican dictator Rafael Trujillo, whom he found to be "a most pleasant man to deal with".

Trujillo was worried by Venezuela's acquisition of 25 Vampire bombers. Cummings knew that Sweden was modernising its air-force and bought 26 Vampires from them for Trujillo, who paid Cummings $3 million more than the Swedes had got.

Trujillo later used the aircraft to crush an uprising organised by another of Cummings's clients, Fidel Castro. Such ironies were common, but Cummings kept on good terms with all sides.

Cummings first met Castro after he had impounded Armalites meant for the man he had overthrown, Fulgencio Batista. Cummings calmly wrote to Castro, asking for payment for his guns, which he duly received after he had demonstrated the rifles to Castro, firing tracer-bullets at petrol cans. It was a spectacular show that rarely failed to clinch a deal.

In the late 1950s, Cummings shifted his sights to Europe. He began by selling materiel from the war back to the new West German army. Then, between 1955 and 1968, he swept the Continent for small arms, buying 4·5 million guns and 500 million rounds of ammunition. In two deals in Spain alone, he acquired a million rifles, left from the Civil War.

The bulk of his haul went to the American domestic market as cheap hunting rifles, until the assassination of Kennedy ended the importation of such guns. Thereafter, Cummings increasingly manufactured, rather than resold, arms.

By the 1970s, Interarms was a global operation. Cummings's later deals included buying arms captured by Israel from the PLO in Lebanon, as well as supplying the governments of the Philippines and Indonesia. He even sold 140 Uhlan lances to the Sudanese Camel Corps, and after the Vietnam War offered to buy the entire arsenal abandoned by America. Its estimated worth was $5 billion — he offered a tenth of that.

Cummings was the chief representative in America for Armalite rifles and Uzi sub-machineguns. He presented favoured clients, such as King Birendra of Nepal, with gold-plated Walther pistols.

He stressed that he conducted his business legitimately, complying with all regulations. Thus he refused to equip Idi Amin because of a UN embargo, and during the Falklands War did not supply Argentina, although he offered her advice on where to find arms.

The only time he was caught breaking an embargo was in 1965, when he brokered a deal for Pakistan, then worried about the arms build-up in India. Cummings flew shells and jets from West Germany to Iran; they were then sent to Pakistan "for repair".

Despite his great wealth, Cummings lived fairly modestly, basing himself in Monte Carlo and the Swiss Alps. His main warehouses were in Virginia and Manchester. Portly and congenial, he collected antique arms and armour; he owned the sword carried by Napoleon at Waterloo.

He and his children took British citizenship in 1972. In recent years, the end of the Cold War had flooded the arms market with cheap weapons, and business had been bad. Nevertheless, his strategy remained the same: "The military market is based on human folly, not normal market precepts. Human folly goes up and down, but it always exists."

He married, first, in 1952 (dissolved 1955), Inka Graetz. He married, secondly, in 1960, Irmgard Blaettler. They had twin daughters, one of whom, Susan, was convicted of manslaughter in Virginia yesterday.

Alan Burgess

BBC producer whose book The Small Woman, about an English missionary in war-torn China, was turned into the film The Inn of the Sixth Happiness

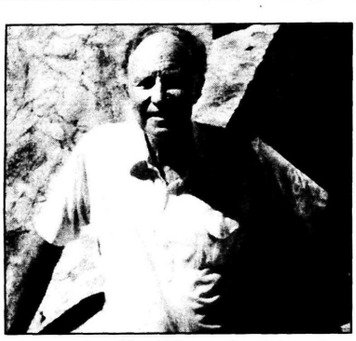
ALAN BURGESS, who has died aged 83, achieved his greatest success with his first book, *The Small Woman*, which was turned into the hugely popular 1958 film *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, with Ingrid Bergman.

Burgess's story was based on the real-life epic of Gladys Aylward, an English missionary who trekked across war-torn China to save 100 Chinese children from Japanese bombing. Their flight from Yangchen to escape the horrors of the Sino-Japanese war took them across mountains and exposed them to constant dangers.

When the 27-day journey ended, Gladys Aylward was suffering from typhus, malnutrition and sheer exhaustion; but the children she had taken into her care were unscathed.

Ingrid Bergman, then at the height of her screen fame, was so impressed by Burgess's script and his understanding of female resourcefulness that 20 years later she commissioned him to ghost her autobiography, *Ingrid: My Story*. This led to a commission to perform a similar service for Ava Gardner, but she died while Burgess was still engaged in research.

Alan Burgess was born on February 1 1915 in Birmingham and educated there at King Edward's School. His father wanted him to be an engineer, but young Alan's inclinations were already turning towards writing and adventure.



Burgess: ghosted Ingrid Bergman's autobiography

Having published his first short stories in a woman's magazine (under the pen name of Doris Coburn), he joined an amateur sailing crew setting out to circumnavigate the globe in a four-masted barquentine, the *Pilar*. He got as far as New Zealand and then spent a year as an Alpine guide in South Island.

Back in Britain, Burgess served in the Merchant Navy until 1941, when he joined the Royal Air Force. He stayed with the RAF throughout the rest of the war and was demobbed in 1946.

He then had the good fortune to join the BBC Radio Features Department in what has come to be regarded by many as its Golden Age. Under the inspired leadership of Laurence Gilliam, Features employed a team of outstanding creative talents who between them could tackle almost any subject which came their way.

Burgess's colleagues included the poets Dylan Thomas and Louis MacNeice, and Douglas Cleverdon, the producer of *The Brains Trust*. When the department was wound up in 1964, partly as an economy measure, partly through having over-reached itself, Burgess moved on to work for other documentary areas of BBC Radio.

Ingrid Bergman as Gladys Aylward in The Inn of the Sixth Happiness (1958)

As a senior features producer, Burgess was responsible for programmes about James Hanratty, Pattie Hearst and Ruth Ellis, the last woman to be hanged in Britain. He was also enthusiastically involved in BBC social life and captained the BBC Golf Society, playing regularly on tours at all the leading British championship courses.

Following the success of *The Small Woman*, Burgess published a string of books similarly based on true stories of courage and endurance. These included *The Lovely Sergeant* (1963), which traced the life of a Suffolk parson's daughter who enlisted in the Serbian Army in the First World War and fell in love with her platoon commander.

Seven Men At Daybreak (1966) was about the Czech partisan plot to assassinate Reinhard Heydrich, the architect of Hitler's "final solution". *Seven Men At Daybreak* was also turned into a film, but did not enjoy the popularity of *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*.

The Longest Tunnel (1990) dealt with the frustrated escape of Allied airmen from Stalag Luft III and their subsequent execution. Although well received, it was overshadowed by Paul Brickhill's much earlier book and film on part of the same story, *The Great Escape*.

Burgess's first marriage ended in divorce. He is survived by his second wife, Katie, whom he met while on a research tour in America in 1982, and by a son and a daughter of his first marriage.

Nizar Qabbani

Erotic and satirical poet who won huge popularity in the Arab world

NIZAR QABBANI, who has died aged 75, was a Syrian poet who enjoyed enormous popularity throughout the Arab world, first for his love poetry and later for outspoken poems on political and social issues, all written in a simple and elegant style.

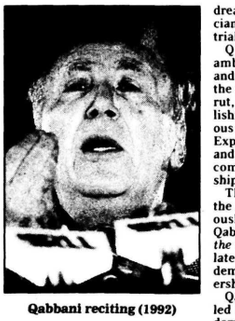
From the age of 19 he produced more than two dozen volumes of poetry, many of which ran into six or seven impressions. His love poems were recorded as lyrics by Arab singers, including such famous names as Umm Kalthoum and Fairouz. Qabbani's political poems articulated popular feelings of frustration with despotic Arab regimes.

The influence of Qabbani's writing was such that sensitive Arab governments banned them. Yet last year a street was named after him in his native Damascus, and the poetry-loving President Assad of Syria sent an aeroplane to London to carry his body back home for a hero's funeral.

Qabbani's two main themes, erotic love and political freedom, struck a powerful chord in readers, though it was to women that his books primarily appealed. To say, as he did, that the emancipation of the individual must precede social emancipation was a daring yet penetrating message.

Nizar Qabbani was born in Damascus on March 21 1923, into a well-to-do merchant family. His great-uncle, Abu Khalil al-Qabbani, was one of the first modern Arab dramatists.

His first volume of poetry, *The Childhood of a Breast*, shocked conservative Damascus society with its bold eroticism and its formal inventiveness, which broke



Qabbani reciting (1992)

many of the rigid conventions of traditional Arabic poetry.

Qabbani was motivated to write in this way by his own feelings, his reading of Verlaine and Rimbaud, and by the suicide of his sister, who was forbidden to marry the man she loved. The book was self-published, financed by his mother, who sold some jewellery to pay for the printing.

After graduating in law from the University of Damascus in 1945, Qabbani joined the Syrian diplomatic service. His 20-year diplomatic career took him to posts in Cairo, Ankara, and Beirut. He continued to write and the conventions of diplomacy did not temper his outspokenness. In 1954 he published *Bread, Hashish and the Moon*, about the tragedy of an Arab society that lives in day-dreams. It offended Syrian politicians, who demanded he be put on trial.

Qabbani served as Syrian ambassador in Peking, Cairo and Madrid, before resigning from the service in 1966 to settle in Beirut, where he set up his own publishing house. By now he was famous throughout the Arab world. Experience refined his eroticism, and made him more aware of the complexity of human relationships.

The 1967 Six Day War, which the Arab armies lost so ignominiously, darkened and politicised Qabbani's vision. *In the Margin of the Book of Defeat* (1967) articulates a bitter and sweeping condemnation of the war's Arab leadership and empty rhetoric.

Qabbani's populist sensibility led him to take the side of Arab demagogues such as Nasser during the Suez crisis and Saddam Hussein during the Gulf War. Yet he remained an opponent of tyranny and corruption.

Qabbani's first marriage ended in divorce. He married his second wife, Balqis al-Rawi in 1973. An Iraqi teacher, she moved to Beirut to join him. In 1981 she was killed in a car-bomb set by pro-Iranian guerrillas. Qabbani later moved to London.

In 1990 he published a bitterly caustic poem, *Father Ignorance Buys Fleet Street*, which lampooned the buying up and political neutering of Arabic newspapers in London by unnamed Arab potentates. The objects of the satire bore a recognisable resemblance to the princes of Saudi Arabia.

Nizar Qabbani is survived by two daughters and a son.

Canon Norman Autton

Hospital chaplain who established professional standards for his ministry

CANON NORMAN AUTTON, who has died aged 77, devoted virtually the whole of his ministry to hospital chaplaincy work; he served three large hospitals and pioneered the development of training for chaplains.

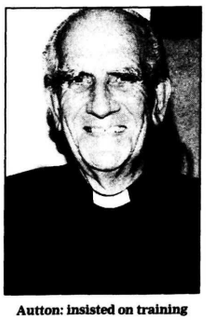
In the process, Autton exercised a considerable influence over the Church of England's approach to ministry in hospitals. He succeeded in convincing bishops and chaplains that a professional approach, parallel to that of doctors and nurses, was essential.

When he became chaplain of the Deva Hospital at Chester in 1956, Autton quickly recognised that, although he had a great interest in ministry to the sick, and some pastoral skill, he had only a rudimentary knowledge of the traditional disciplines and methods of hospital life.

Five years later, having learned these the hard way and studied American methods of training, he moved to St George's Hospital, then at Hyde Park Corner, where he persuaded the board of governors to make provision for six-week summer courses for theological students.

Out of this initiative grew other courses for new chaplains and for parish clergy who ministered part-time at their local hospitals. Several other hospitals and their chaplains were soon offering similar courses.

In 1967 Autton became the first director of training in the Church of England's Hospital Chaplaincy Council. His insights and experience were put to good use throughout the country and in other churches. Through his work, the status of hospital chaplains



Autton: insisted on training

was raised, and eventually their number greatly increased.

Norman William James Autton was born at Neath, south Wales, on October 27 1920. He went from Christ's College, Brecon, to Selwyn College, Cambridge, and returned to Wales to prepare for Holy Orders at St Michael's College, Llandaff.

From 1944 to 1950 he was a curate at Merthyr Tydfil, and then spent three years as a curate at Bridgend. Visiting parishioners in the local Laleston hospital convinced him of the importance of the Church's ministry to the sick, and soon after moving to another curacy at Hillingdon, north London, in 1953, he became assistant chaplain of the Guild of Health.

Three years of encouraging all the churches to take this aspect of their work more seriously led Autton to believe that he must himself do something practical, and the next 12 years were spent at the Deva and St George's hospitals.

After his five years with the Hospital Chaplaincy Council, Autton returned to his homeland as chaplain of the University of Wales Hospital, Cardiff. In 1977 he was made a Canon of Llandaff Cathedral.

He belonged to the Anglo-Catholic wing of his Church, and the sacramental element of ministry to the sick was always important to him. So also was tradition and, although he had a warm, sympathetic bedside-manner, patients were left in no doubt that they were in the presence of a priest.

He contributed three volumes to the Library of Pastoral Care, *The Mentally Ill* (1963), *The Dying* (1966) and *The Bereaved* (1967). He also served on a group representing the main churches in England and Wales. This group considered funerals and the ministry to the bereaved; Autton edited its report. One of the recommendations of the report was that cremated remains should be as reverently interred as a body would be.

Following his retirement from hospital ministry in 1985, Autton remained on the Chapter of Llandaff Cathedral, serving as Chancellor until 1992.

He is survived by his wife Kate, and by a son and a daughter.

Dees De Bruyne. In Ghent, aged 57. Belgian painter known for his depictions of low life and moral depravity. Committed himself to a psychiatric hospital in search of inspiration. His work attracted a following in America.

CHESS

Fischer and Spassky challenge

By Malcolm Pein

THE old adversaries and former world champions Bobby Fischer and Boris Spassky look set to play each other in Budapest, Fischer's adopted home, in the autumn.

Spassky, in an interview in the Russian chess magazine 64, said he was planning to play Fischer at the latter's new love, Shuffle Chess.

Fischer took the world title from Spassky in a celebrated match at Reykjavik in 1972 but was stripped of it three years later for refusing to defend it on terms laid down by FIDE. In 1992, they met again in Montenegra in defiance of UN sanctions against the country. Fischer won and both players pocketed six figure sums.

In recent years Fischer has railed against the top Grandmasters and said that chess has been spoiled by the voluminous amounts of opening theory. Most GMs use computers to research and memorise openings nowadays.

Fischer has devised his new game of Shuffle Chess which involves the pieces of both sides being shuffled around on the first rank before the game starts.

The bishops stay on opposite colours and the positions of the pieces on the first rank are determined by a computer program developed by Fischer. With opening theory dispensed with, Fischer contends that the best player, not the man with the best memory, will triumph.

Vishy Anand, the world number two, continued his excellent start in Madrid and defeated Michael Krasenkov, of Poland, to move to 2/2. Anand has had the advantage of the white pieces in his two games.

City of Madrid round 2: FIDE Category XVII, ave rating 2,655. Anand 1·0 Krasenkov, English 44 moves; Yermolinsky 0·1 San Segundo; Slav Meran 28; Svidler draw Leko, Caro Kann 64; Adams draw Illescas, Closed Sicilian 60; Granda Zuniga 0·1 Belyavsky, Nimzo-Indian 47.

Scores: Anand (India) 2·2, San Segundo (Spain) 1·5, Yermolinsky (USA), Svidler (Russia), Leko (Hungary), Illescas (Spain), Belyavsky (Slovenia) 1, Krasenkov (Poland), Adams (England), Granda Zuniga (Peru) 0·5.

President's Cup (Elista), round 2, speed chess play-off: Zvaginsev-Ivanchuk 0·1, 1·0, draw, draw, 0·1 Ivanchuk qualifies. Georgiev-Vaganian draw, draw, 0·1, draw Vaganian qualifies. Sakaev-Bologan draw, draw, draw, draw, 1·0 Bologan qualifies. Tsviakov-Gelfand 1·0, 1·0 Tsviakov qualifies. Khalifman-Alexandrov draw, draw, 1·0, draw Khalifman qualifies. Dreev-Rublevsky draw, draw, draw, draw, 1·0 Dreev qualifies.

Round 3 pairings: Vaganian-Ivanchuk; Sakaev-Bareev; Khalifman-Tsviakov; Dreev-Salov.

The remarkable last round game from Aberdeen.

J Shaw — A Summerscale
Aberdeen (5)

1 e4	c5	2 c3	e6
3 d4	b6	4 Be3	Nf6
5 Nd2	Bb7	6 Bd3	Nc6
7 f3	cxd4	8 cxd4	Nb4
9 Bb1	Ba6	10 Nb3	Qc7
11 Ne2	Rc8	12 Nc3	d5
13 e5	Nd7	14 f4	g6
15 a3	Nc6	16 Bd3	Bxd3
17 Qxd3	Be7	18 0-0	Qb7
19 g4	a6	20 Rf2	Rc7
21 Rg2	Kd8!	22 f5	Kc8
23 Rf1	Nd8	24 Bh6	Rg8
25 f6	Bf8	26 Be3	Nc6
27 Rc1	b5	28 Rgc2	Nb6
29 Nxb5	axb5	30 Na5	Nxa5
31 Rxc7+	Qxc7	32 Rxc7+	Kxc7
33 Qxb5	Nc6	34 Kf2	Nc4
35 g5	Bxa3!!	36 bxa3	Rb8
37 Qa4	Rb2+	38 Kf3	Rb3!
39 Qa8	Nxd4+	40 Kf2	Rb2+
41 Kg3	Nf5+	42 Kh3	Nfxe3
43 Qf8	Nxe5	44 Qc5+	Nc6
45 Qxe3	d4	46 Qd3	Rf2!?
47 Qg3+	1-0		

After imaginative play involving a king walk and a superb sacrifice to release his trapped rook it was a shame that Summerscale missed the following study-like win. Instead of 41...Nf5+, 41...Nxe5 leaves White with nothing better than 42.Qf8 (If 42 Qa7+ Kc6 and the king escapes eg 43.Qa6+ Kc5 44.Qa7+ Kc4 45.Qc7+ Kd5)

After 42.Qf8 the rook and two knights can force a beautiful checkmate with 42...Nf1+ 43.Kg4 Rg2+ 44.Kf4 (44.Kh3 Rxh2+ 45.Kg4 Rg2+ 46.Kf4 Rf2+ 47.Kg4 h5+! 48.gxh6 Rg2+ 49.Kf4 g5 mate) 44...Rf2+ 45.Kg4 Ne5+ 46.Kg5 Rf3+ 47.Kh4 Ndf5 mate.

If 42...Nxe5 43.Qf8 Rf2 44.Qc5+ draws

If 39.Qxb5 Nd2+ 40.Bxd2 Nxd4+ and Nxb5 gives black a won endgame.

● David Hooper, one Britain's leading amateur players in the 1940s and 50s and a chess historian has died, aged 82.

His first notable over the board success was at the Blackpool International tournament in 1944. In the same year he won the British Correspondence Championship title.

Hooper, who was born in Reigate, Surrey, on Aug 31, 1915, played five times in the British Championship. Between 1952-54, he became a regular England player and played in the 1952 Olympiad. He won the Surrey Championship three times and was London Champion in 1948.

He produced works on Wilhelm Steinitz and *The Unknown Capablanca* but is best known for *The Oxford Companion to Chess* co-authored with Ken Whyld in 1984 which remains the standard reference work on the history of the game.

"Nizar Qabbani." Daily Telegraph, 14 May 1998, p. 29. The Telegraph Historical Archive, link.gale.com/apps/doc/IO0702966706/TGRH?u=tou&sid=bookmark-TGRH. Accessed 9 July 2024.