

Mr. Anthony Harro
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Newsday
Long Island, N.Y. 11747

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Dear Tony,

What I know of Jim Hougan's newest commercialization of untenable theories, packaged entertainingly, of course, is limited to your interesting and in some ways perceptive review in Sunday's Wx Post. I marked a couple of passages as I read it. The only "Secret Agenda" I perceive is unjustified and unfair criticism of the CIA that, in the end, will be helpful to it where it needs help right now, behind the scenes in the Congress. There it will vaporize Hougan's commercialization, and it will continue to be exempt from its unexposed guilty acts.

Believe me, I've read hundreds of thousands of pages of government records that were expected to be secret forever, and what the errant dearly love is to be able to demolish criticism. With a book, generally a few selections suffice, and they pick those that are easy marks.

When Watergate broke two different German publishers approached me to do a book, the second as soon as the first changed his mind. After the second made the same decision, I continued and I completed a rather poor draft, poor mostly because it was too smart-alecky, not from its content.

Hougan's theory that the Post limited itself to the White House only because of hatred of Nixon while "ignoring leads that might have shown that Hunt and McCord" were still CIA is complete nonsense. The Post limited itself, I agree, but its self-imposed limitation was to getting rid of Nixon by forcing him to resign. The same criticism can be made of the Senate committee and its staff.

The Post did ignore leads relating to the CIA, but not those made up by Hougan. These leads relate to other improper CIA domestic activity and quite possibly to the Mexican laundry. I came on them while tracing Hunt, almost entirely from public sources. I had only one secret source and I must continue to protect it.

The Post also ignored the CIA's connections to the efforts to impeach Justice Douglas, in which Hunt and other CIA types were engaged while still CIA. I have the proofs. I gave these and others to Bernstein, whose father had been a friend of mine, and to Woodward.

For some years Hunt was engaged in proscribed domestic activity. There is a prima facie case that this included blocking publication of my first book. It is known that the CIA fostered publication of books it wanted published, often had written, but nobody has ever undertaken to learn whether it flipped that coin and discouraged or prevented publication of books it did not want published. I think Hunt was involved in that. He had a cover address with a since defunct literary agency, with a direct tie to Washington so he could appear to be taking calls in New York City. He then also was with the Mullen Agency, again I have the proofs, and "elms" testimony about when Hunt was first connected with Mullen and how he got there is perjury. During that time, while still a CIA employee, he tried to start an agency of his own. He got at least as far as printing a letterhead I've seen. Colson also wanted him to run such an "agency" for the White House while he was still at CIA. I have that memo.

There was never a time when Hunt was on the lam that he was not in touch with or sheltered by CIA people, current or retired. They were, I am confident, protecting him to protect themselves. The CIA appears to have known where he was all the time he was hiding and to have withheld this from Justice.

On its part, Justice managed never to indicate to others what it had reason to believe is at least part of the content of those erased 18 minutes of tape. The coincidence in time makes it reasonably certain that it was what Pat Gray had about Hunt in Haldeman's hands about the time he and Nixon got back from Florida, as I recall the Monday morning after the breakin. *I have this.*

The Mullen Agency had a Mexico City office on the same street as the Mexican launderer of the accounted-for money. (Other money, like Vesco's, is not accounted for. Nor to the best of my knowledge was it ever traced. I have the serial numbers of all the bills Dorothy Hunt had with her when her place crashed, and if I had them the government could have, and it could have traced them. Most were large enough.) The same street may not have any meaning, but a tracing of phone numbers could, and if I remember correctly I have Mullen's. Along with the name of a man who used *it and a* Mullen cover address and who disappeared from Washington when Watergate broke and has never been mentioned publicly.

There is much that is unexposed, but "ougan merely hides it by seeking to leave a false scent for any journalistic bloodhounds. So I welcome your comment that mixed in with what may be information is "questionable, even reckless, assumptions about motive and purpose."

You conclude with the suggestion that his book "should lead to a reexamination and reassessment of important parts of the story." By whom you do not suggest, and I believe there is no possibility that this could be by the Congress or Justice. However, why not Newsday? It has done some great investigative reporting in the past. My advanced age and serious health problems preclude my ever using what I've done on this. If you are interested, you are welcome to everything I have, subject only to the protection of a single source. There were some leaks to me, but they were anonymous, so I do not mean them.

There is a mystery, too: why did Tad Szulc, then with the Times, but not for long after it, protect Hunt by misidentifying him as Barker? This interested me, although almost everyone ignored it. (Except, perhaps, the Times.) So I read his books, and I was surprised that they dealt with CIA operations in a manner that would please at least part of the CIA. Cuba, Dominican Republic. And then I found that in Who's Who he does not account for some years. Provocative, if nothing else, I think.

If you are interested, I cannot travel except in a real emergency, when it wears me out. I haven't driven out of Frederick since before we first spoke. I can walk limited distances and drive locally, but that is it.

Best wishes,

Harold

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Deep Throat, Phone Home

SECRET AGENDA

Watergate, Deep Throat and the CIA

By Jim Hougan

Random House. 347 pp. \$19.95

By Anthony Marro

MORE THAN 150 books already have been written about Watergate, and to understand the new dimension Jim Hougan hopes to add to this record with *Secret Agenda*, it is necessary to understand the official, or at least the widely accepted, version of events. Boiled to its essence, it goes something like this:

In May and June 1972, a group of men working for the Nixon reelection campaign staged two break-ins at the Democratic National Committee offices at Watergate. The group included G. Gordon Liddy, James McCord, and E. Howard Hunt. Liddy was a former FBI agent. Hunt and McCord were retired CIA officers. With the aid of some hirelings from Miami's Cuban exile community, McCord installed two wiretaps on the night of May 27-28, one of them on the phone of Lawrence O'Brien, the DNC chairman, and a second on the phone of R. Spencer Oliver, another party official.

For about two weeks, in a motel room across the street, yet another former FBI agent, Alfred C. Baldwin III, eavesdropped on the wiretapped phone conversations, and typed up summaries for McCord. These were passed along to Liddy, who had them retyped under the heading "GEMSTONE," the code name for the operation, and then gave them to Jeb Stuart Magruder and other campaign officials. Because of a technical problem, the tap on O'Brien's phone never worked. The information from the tap on Oliver's phone proved to be far more personal than political, much of it from women describing sexual escapades, performed or anticipated. Baldwin assumed he was eavesdropping on DNC secretaries, but so many of the conversations were so spicy that they gave rise, as J. Anthony Lukas wrote in *Nightmare: The Underside of the Nixon Years*, to "unconfirmed reports that the telephone was being used for some sort of call-girl service catering to Congressmen and other prominent Washingtonians."

In order to repair the wiretap on O'Brien's telephone, and also to photograph his files, a second break-in was attempted on the night of June 16-17. While inside the DNC office, surgical gloves on their hands, cameras and listening devices in their possession, McCord and the men from Miami were discovered and arrested. The trail quickly led from them to Liddy and Hunt and then to the White House.

NOTHING in Hougan's book suggests that Nixon's political apparatus was not to blame for the break-in, or that Nixon himself didn't deserve to be run out of town on a rail. The break-ins were planned in the office of then attorney general John Mitchell, funded with money from the reelection campaign, and executed by the president's men.

But this, Hougan argues, is only part of the story. His account goes well beyond, to include a prostitution ring, heavy CIA involvement, spying on the White House as well as on the Democrats, and plots within plots, with McCord scheming at the end to sabotage his own break-in. What he offers up is not so much a totally revisionist history as a history with a significant new dimension and perspective.

It likely will take some time for Hougan's reporting to be absorbed, cross-checked, challenged and tested, and whether this proves to be an important book or simply a controversial one will depend on how well it survives the scrutiny that it is sure to receive. For what Hougan is doing here is attacking the version of Watergate that has been constructed and reinforced by journalists, prosecutors, congressional investigators and academics over more than a decade—a version which he now labels a "counterfeit history."

Anthony Marro, managing editor of Newsday, covered the investigations of Watergate and the intelligence agencies while a reporter for Newsday, Newsweek and The New York Times.

At bottom, his contention is this: Hunt and McCord never left the CIA. They remained under the control of the agency, with Hunt spying on the White House as well as on the Democrats.

There never was a tap placed on the telephones in the DNC offices. Instead, the conversations that were monitored by Baldwin were from the wiretap of a prostitution ring located in the nearby Columbia Plaza Apartments, some of whose customers were being steered there by a secretary in the DNC. This tap most likely had been planted by a private detective named Louis Russell, who died of a heart attack in 1973. Russell was a former FBI agent, a friend of one of the prostitutes, an employe of McCord's private security firm, and, in Hougan's view, a CIA operative tapping the calls for the agency. The connection between the prostitutes and the DNC had been arranged by a Washington attorney, Phillip Bailey, who had persuaded a secretary at the DNC to steer clients to a prostitute identified only as "Tess." Since he traveled frequently and his office was empty, the secretary and the clients had used Spencer Oliver's phone to arrange meetings with "Tess."

This secret CIA operation involving the prostitutes was so sensitive that McCord and Russell set out to sabotage the break-in at Watergate to insure that the other Watergate burglars wouldn't stumble across it. "In effect," Hougan writes, "the snake had swallowed its tail: CIA agents working under cover of Nixon's re-election committee came to be targeted against their own operation. . . . All that the agents could do was to stand tall and, when all else failed, blow their own cover." By doing this, Hougan says, the information from the wiretaps on the prostitutes would be preserved for the exclusive use of the CIA, which presumably would use it to blackmail important people, or to create psychiatric profiles of them.

A secondary theme of the book is that the press in general and *The Washington Post* in particular was so blinded by its hatred of Nixon that it focused almost entirely on the White House, ignoring leads that might have shown that Hunt and McCord were being controlled by the CIA, and that Watergate was as much a sex scandal and an intelligence agency scandal as a political one.

AS THIS summary suggests, there are different levels of reporting and an uneven quality of evidence presented in this book. Hougan has attacked the official record of Watergate with persistence and considerable skill, pointing up scores of questions, flaws, contradictions and holes. At the same time, much of the new evidence he assembles, and the way in which he weaves it together, is likely to itself come under challenge. His case that

the phone conversations overheard by Baldwin really were those of a prostitution ring, for example, centers in large part around a disbarred lawyer (Bailey), a dead man who Hougan describes as a drunk (Russell), a prostitute identified only by a pseudonym ("Tess") and a DNC secretary (who is not named but whose identity is clearly hinted at), who appears not to have been questioned by Hougan about any of this. Indeed, of all these key people only one—Bailey—appears to have been interviewed by Hougan; neither McCord, who Hougan says refused to be interviewed, nor Baldwin seems to have been confronted with this new information.

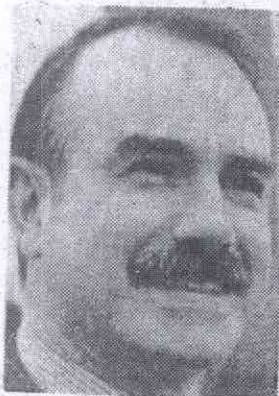
Because Hunt and McCord and the men from Miami, all of them Bay of Pigs veterans, had been on CIA payrolls, there were attempts right from the start to link the agency to the break-in. While reporters and congressional investigators found many contacts between the burglars and the agency, however, no one was able to show conclusively that they were operating under agency control. Hougan cites the technical help that the CIA provided Hunt for his White House missions (wigs, cameras and various spying devices), the many contacts between Hunt and CIA officials in this period (Hunt describes them as social lunches and tennis dates; Hougan calls them "clandestine meetings"), the reports that Hunt was feeding the CIA "gossip" about White House officials, and then argues that, when added together, "the evidence is overwhelming that the retirements of Hunt and McCord had been fabricated," and that Hunt was "spying on the White House."

Nearly all of his evidence is circumstantial, of course, and while it is plausible, some readers won't see it as being as "overwhelming" as he does. His reporting on the possible lack of a wiretap at the DNC seems more impressive, the key evidence coming from FBI reports that he says he obtained through the Freedom of Information Act. They indicate that the FBI was convinced that an inspection of the DNC phones and offices immediately after the break-in showed no signs of wiretaps or bugs, and that the devices later uncovered (they were not found until September 13, after a DNC secretary complained of noise on the phone line) probably could not have transmitted to the receiving equipment Baldwin had been using to monitor calls.

Hougan's theory is that the devices found on the DNC phones had been planted, probably by Russell, in such a way as to insure that the FBI would find them. They were so big and clunky that no one could miss them. Both the bureau and the media would then assume that a tap actually had been placed on Spencer Oliver's phone, as Baldwin had been telling reporters, and thus would be steered away from the taps on the prostitutes.

Hougan's reporting on this seems, from a distance, solid enough to be taken seriously. But

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G. Gordon Liddy



E. Howard Hunt



James McCord



Richard M. Nixon



John Mitchell



Alfred C. Baldwin III



Jeb Stuart Magruder

one obvious question is why, if the FBI reports are as clear as Hougan makes them to be, they didn't surface long before now, either leaked by the FBI to the White House to help defuse the scandal, or provided to defense lawyers whose clients would seem to have been entitled to them for use in their trials. And this is only one of the many new questions raised by the evidence that Hougan offers up in posing answers to old ones, among them his contention that the prostitution ring was really a CIA operation, and such an important one that McCord would get himself arrested to protect it.

HOUGAN cites no sources and produces no documents showing that the CIA had launched such a project, received information from it, or even knew about it. Using a journalism of juxtaposition he builds a case that goes something like this: McCord and Hunt were still working for the CIA. McCord and Russell were working as a team. Russell probably was wiretapping the prostitutes. The CIA often gathered information on the sex lives of people. Hunt was sending "gossip" to the CIA. McCord did so many things to compromise the break-in—putting tape back over a lock after it had been removed by a guard, for example—that it's clear he was trying to sabotage it, and the only reason would be to protect an even more important operation. Conclusion: Russell and McCord were wiretapping the prostitutes for the CIA, and this was the operation McCord wanted to protect.

One of the disconcerting things about this book is the frequency with which Hougan mixes diligent information gathering with questionable, even reckless, assumptions about motive and purpose. At times his piecing together of information and events resembles not the careful mosaic he insists he is creating but a hodgepodge of fact, innuendo, untested hypotheses and conjecture.

Even if Hougan is right about the wiretaps on the call girls, there are other, more benign (or at least different) explanations for what might have been taking place. It is possible that Russell was tapping



Alexander Haig Jr.

cerned with preserving the secrecy of the call girl operation that he would torpedo the Watergate break-in to protect it, one has to ask why he would have let Baldwin eavesdrop on the phone calls in the first place. And if the purpose of the second break-in was to get information about the prostitutes and their clients, which Hougan insists that it was, it seems strange that none of the plotters, including Magruder in his testimony and Liddy in his book, has ever cited it as one of their goals.

THE SUBTITLE of this book is "Watergate, Deep Throat and the CIA," and there are suggestions that the true identity of "Deep Throat," the name Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein gave to one of Woodward's most important sources, might be a key to understanding how the Watergate scandal unraveled in the way that it did. The chapter on "Throat," however, begins with the disclaimer that "any conclusion must be speculative," and then quickly degenerates into a sort of journalistic parlor game, the bottom line of which seems to be that it might have been Al Haig (like Deep Throat, he smoked and drank scotch whiskey) but then again it might not have been.

Hougan also suggests that "Deep Throat" might have been a member of the intelligence community, perhaps someone Woodward had gotten to know while serving as a Navy officer in a Pentagon communications unit. And in this, too, he seems to be searching for yet more conspiracy, for evidence that *The Post* and its reporters allowed themselves to be steered away from possible CIA involvement because of nudgings from people, presumably CIA operatives or friends, who would prefer they investigate links to the Nixon White House rather than links to the agency.

What is one to make of all this?

To believe it in toto, one has to believe that unbeknownst to Liddy and the White House, Hunt and McCord were working for the CIA; that unbeknownst to Hunt, McCord was involved in yet an-

the calls simply because his friends, the prostitutes, had asked him to. It is possible that he was himself hoping to blackmail the clients. It is possible he was doing it for his own amusement, as a sort of electronic voyeur. And it is possible that McCord, having failed to plant a working device during the first break-in, plugged into the wiretaps he knew Russell had placed on the prostitutes, using the material to pacify Liddy and Magruder until a second break-in could get his own wiretaps at the DNC working properly.

Indeed, if McCord was so con-

cerned with preserving the secrecy of the call girl operation that he would torpedo the Watergate break-in to protect it, one has to ask why he would have let Baldwin eavesdrop on the phone calls in the first place. And if the purpose of the second break-in was to get information about the prostitutes and their clients, which Hougan insists that it was, it seems strange that none of the plotters, including Magruder in his testimony and Liddy in his book, has ever cited it as one of their goals.

other CIA operation that would cause him to sabotage the break-in; that unbeknownst to Baldwin, he was monitoring wiretaps not from Democratic headquarters, but from a prostitution ring. One has to believe not only that the CIA would risk spying on the White House and on the sexual activities of powerful Democrats, but that it would use the likes of McCord, who Hougan says behaved so oddly that agency officials "fretted over his eccentricities," and Russell, who he describes as a drunk, to do it. This is a lot to accept, even knowing that the agency's history of sexual spying would

make a Bronx vice squad detective blush, and that it once proposed assassinating Castro with an exploding conch shell.

Some of Hougan's contentions, particularly those labeling the alleged prostitution ring as a CIA operation, strike me as simply not justified by the evidence cited. Some of his flat assertions, such as his statements that "The conclusion is inescapable that McCord sabotaged the June 16 break-in . . ." and that Hunt was "spying on the White House," still seem, at the end of 347 pages of documentation, to be more in the nature of working hypotheses than

prudent conclusions.

Hougan warns readers at the start that he doesn't have all the answers, saying his hope is for yet another formal investigation of Watergate. Even without one, he has added an enormous amount of raw data and information to the record, and his book should lead to a reexamination and reassessment of important parts of the the story. Whether the ultimate conclusions match Hougan's remains to be seen. But sometimes the best that journalism can do is to raise legitimate questions, and this, at the least, Hougan seems to have done. ■