

Should any of this be added inserted?

the third
Almost a third of a page of The Washington Post's main news section on Thursday, July 11, 1974, is devoted to a quite legitimate news story headed "Ex-CIA Spy to Give Detailed Account of Covert CIA Operations."

"Ex-Spy" is Philip B.F. Agee, whose name surfaced fortuitously as soon as Senator Howard Baker's misrepresented Watergate committee report on the CIA in Watergate was released. It is a typed report submitted to the committee. Copies were then electronically mimeographed. After it was prepared release was timed. Each of its separate parts - and not even its size is accurately reported - bears the hand-lettered notation, "Embargoed FOR RELEASE 9 AM EDT July 2, 1974." *copy*

The pages, too, are hand-lettered, indicating editing. Page 36 - the news accounts are of a 24-page report - is headed "ACTION REQUIRED." "MULLEN AND COMPANY RELATIONSHIP" on pages 37 and 38. It has two numbered parts, "1. Interviews" and "2. Documents." The first has four subdivisions.

These Mullen "ACTION REQUIRED" specifics provide a good illustration of how the old analysts' and investigators' maxim, "Seize a single fact and bulldog it" works. ~~What~~ Baker is up to - and isn't - is readily apparent from them, if no news account made mention of either.

Baker's Watergate committee responsibilities, like that committees, was entirely restricted to the 1972 campaign, particularly The Watergate. There is no "ACTION REQUIRED" that mentions the campaign or The Watergate. Not only is neither phrase used - the subjects he list do not address them.

1. d says it "is necessary to clarify the 'WH flap.'" Here "WH" does not mean White House. It is CIA acronym for "Western Hemisphere."

By the end of the week the whole story Baker hid was out - all the supposedly secret names he hid and the nature of the "WH flap."

Agee was identified by name, his disenchantment with what the CIA was doing in Latin America was reported, that he had written a book was noted, and there was even a juicy bum steer, that he had spilled his guts to the USSR.

He hadn't.

There is no reason to doubt Agee's sincerity. Only a "hunt could spend a career in Latin America and implementing United States policy there without getting sick over it. The continent's majority is that desparately poor, that much the victim of short-sighted American design.

Baker's sincerity is another matter. So is his intent.

The ~~is~~ ALMOST INVISIBLE THREAD ON WHICH THE WHOLE~~x~~ Agee story hung is his connection with Mullen when he was with CIA. Mullen provided his cover.

But that had ended with his disenchantment five years earlier - in 1969.

Because this seemed like a juicy CIA story - and Agee's personal account of it can be - it was legitimate news. But nobody asked, "What does this have to do with The Watergate?" Or "What is Baker up to?" The faked "subversion" followed by the leaking of accurate details no longer any kind of problem to the CIA kept the press pacified.

It is not a Watergate story.

Thatbit was not a Watergate story was apparent long before the Post published July 11.

So, I wondered why it had sent one of its executives, Laurence Stern, who has also done much of its CIA writing, all the way to England to look Agee up "at his modest sea-side hideaway."

There is nothing in the story the Post's "London man could not have gotten and written. There is virtually nothing in it that the Associated Press had not given its members long before. (The Post did not use AP's copy.) Why, then, send a man who is more than an ordinary reporter, who spend all that money and waste so much of his valuable time?

Less than
Two sentences in Stern's story may justify the expense:

"During a brief assignment at CIA headquarters in Langley in 1966 he set up the Mexico City 'cover' operation for the CIA, conducted under the front of the Robert Mullen company...;" and

"It is Agee's opinion that the Mullen cover arrangement in Mexico ~~City~~ 'is completely irrelevant' to Watergate."

The first may be Agee's belief but the Mullen-CIA connection was quite old and well-established long before 1966. The second required no opinion from Agee, who was out of

the CIA and the cold long, long before The Watergate. Unless gifted with exception ESP he could have had no information. Certainly no personal knowledge. But this was immaterial to the more than usually sharp Stern.

The Mullen-CIA connection was reported by the Post, if in extra-limited form, as soon as the Watergate story broke. Later, if reserved for its Sunday magazine Potomac the Post had buried mention of Mullen's European operation, "Interprogress." It knew the Mullen-CIA relationship had not begun in 1966.

But the Post had a problem - at least one. As I had written long before Baker's report was released or even leaked, it was obvious that Woodward and Bernstein if not the Post had for all practical purposes if not explicitly made a deal to protect Bennett in return for what he could provide. If any reporter in Washington didn't realize this he is an incompetent. Yet nobody ever suggested it until Baker was ready to leak it, as a charge against the Post.

Because of the Post-Nixon relationship, this is Baker overtly defending Nixon, which also was obvious from the outset.

To clobber the Post was to please Nixon. To blame the CIA for Nixonian crime was to defend him.

Baker was less than subtle. He signalled the start of his special operation during the previously-noted questioning of Hunt, when he suddenly abandoned a legitimate line of questioning and decided he'd go into that in an executive or secret session.

His release of this report and the prompt leaking of all the details, including names, is more than persuasive proof that a secret session was not needed in the interest of "national security." Nixon's security is another matter, as is Baker's political future with the Nixon hard-core.

The CIA lost nothing in this. It had taken all the necessary precautions five years earlier, when Agee quit. It knew every cover he could blow, every operation he could expose, every name he could name. Its secrets in matters like these are not from any imagined enemy. They are secrets held from the American people. Baker did not compromise it and it may well have fed the leads to Agee, whose book had been contracted anyway.