

wide silver-studded belt, and boots.

In front of us a big Chicano man lifts his beer can to the moon, calling out, "It's Bonnie, Bonnie!" He throws one arm around his wife and another about his little son's shoulders, and, still managing a swig of beer, he points for the boy. "Bonnie!"

The Streak has started to blast, its jets flaring. Beckoning still, the blonde girl calls the monster slowly forward, then thrusting her palms out orders it, stop, stop.

"You'll notice, friends, *Funny Cars* normally have Chrysler hemis, 'cause the hemisphere head gives you more power, that's all there is to it. A supercharged, fuel-injected Chrysler will blow the doors off anything that Chevy makes."

Patting the *Funny Car*, she walks away to uproarious applause.

"Bonnie, Bonnie!"

We're on our feet. Halfway down the track he's going to do the *Funny Car's* equivalent of a biker's wheelie—in full career lifting up the front wheel or wheels in bronco-busting style. A few months ago the *Arizona Daily Star* published a church appeal: "DO A WHEELIE FOR JESUS!"

"Titanium skid plates on the rear of the car, and he'll make a real loud burnout for you. Those long smoky burnouts are to heat up the tires, you know. And when he raises up, oh, Tom is going to raise up for you! White hot sparks come out of those titanium plates, and it's got to be the greatest show in drag racing. And notice, notice, as *The Streak* passes you, the lettering on this car changes from red to green to blue under the lights! Man, oh man, that's real wild custom work! Beautiful, beautiful!"

And in front of us the Chicano man turns about and reeling in glory shouts to everybody in the stands: "I plated that son of a bitch! Oh yes, man! In my shop!"

OUT OF THERE, in the parking lot, we drive off and all those roaring engines recede into the night. Have we just come from the camp of the enemy? How to sort out one's enemies, that's the problem. A dear friend has said: "Don't knock the way the other guy swings." (She more or less excepts the Marquis de Sade, et cetera.) This would mean

that one ought not to disapprove of others' sense of beauty, such as the awesome and horrible beauty we have just shared.

For it was that, and we did share it. We were drawn into the light-works and—in Marinetti's terms, the poetry—of shattering, smelly machines. (For what it's worth, we may note that at one point Marinetti, an early friend of Mussolini's, at least played at supporting Fascism.) Two hours went by and we sat, as his manifesto put it, "transfixed," forgetting to wonder about the percussive effects on nearby animal life, and the grievous environmental insult that will always follow from this sort of thing.

We sat in on a continuously reverberating insult to the spring night

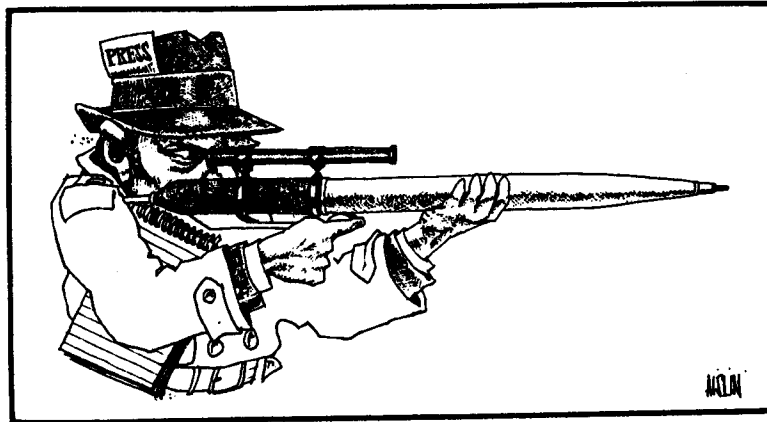
and all plant and animal life it might contain. We had then shared in the Joy of Vandals, was this not true?

But had this insult been intended as such, Marinetti's way? What may be worst of all, I don't think so. With what loving care the assault on what we hold dear is managed. In front of us the Honcho of the Conquistador Garage, wild with pride, clutches his little boy's hand as *The Streak* that he plated blasts off from the Christmas Tree. And all over this land may be seen the devotions of dudes in greasy coveralls, down on their knees in body shops. My cultural enemy worships too. □

Alan Harrington is the author, most recently, of Psychopaths (Simon and Schuster) and, with Dan Sakall, Love and Evil: From a Probation Officer's Casebook (Little, Brown).

THE FOURTH ESTATE

A GOOD WORD FOR THE CIA



Terry Meether

Contrary to the melodrama now playing in the national press
by George Crile III

IN THE CURRENT welter of reporting about the CIA, the press once again displays its talent for the obvious. By and large the press has chosen to write a straightforward melodrama that amplifies the political passions of the moment and makes little attempt at subtlety, understanding, or critical reasoning. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than a com-

parison of the theatrical roles assigned to two CIA agents who recently came in from the cold to tell their stories. One of the stories has been accepted as revealed truth; the other has been all but ignored.

Consider first the experience of the man identified as the true prophet. Philip Agee had been a zealous middle-level CIA agent in Latin America for twelve years when, so

tells us, he discovered that a man he had caused to be arrested by Uruguayan officials was tortured. He had apparently been unaware of this Latin-American police tradition, and the incident triggered a convulsion in his thinking. He soon came to view the CIA as the chief force of evil in the world and resolved to write a book telling all. In his *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, Agee does indeed seem to tell all that he knows, including names of CIA officials and foreign leaders who cooperated with them.

The book appears clearly to violate the Espionage Act (which no doubt explains his self-imposed exile), and he makes no bones about his new loyalties. He wrote much of the book in Cuba, and he reports meeting regularly with Cuban intelligence and embassy officials in Paris and London. He describes himself as a socialist with aspirations, as he wrote in *Esquire*, to become a Communist and a revolutionary, and he praises the KGB as an organization perhaps repressive in Russia, but supporting the right causes and movements abroad.

His current efforts are devoted to destroying the CIA by exposing the identities of as many CIA agents abroad as he can. A traitor? A Russian or Cuban spy? Far from it. "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" is Agee's motto, and in this era when informed opinion is focusing its concerns on internal threats, he is accepted as a crusader against evil. He is frequently interviewed on television, and many journalists turn to him as an invaluable and reliable source of information on the true nature of the CIA.

"Why did you decide to blow the whistle on the CIA?" he was asked in a lengthy interview that appeared in the August issue of *Playboy*. Agee: "I finally understood after 12 years with the agency, how much suffering it was causing, that millions of people all over the world had been killed or at least had their lives destroyed by the CIA and the institutions it supports. I just couldn't sit by and do nothing."

PLAYBOY: "Millions of people? Aren't you overstating the case?"

AGEE: "I wish I were."

While *Playboy* was running this interview, its sister publication, *Oui*, was running a short story of Agee's

Won't you help us buy
food for hungry children
this Christmas?



Your \$10 gift—an amount that buys "just another Christmas gift" for more fortunate kids—can mean hundreds of dollars worth of bread, meat and milk to thousands of families in the rural South.

These families simply do not have enough to eat. But with the Federal Food Stamp Program and the help of volunteers working out of local NAACP branches, the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund makes just a little money go a long way towards the relief from hunger and malnutrition.

Sometimes as little as \$1 will buy a penniless couple \$64 worth of food stamps. Occasionally, as much as \$20, can give each member of a family of 16 about 65¢ worth of food each day for a month. Mostly, we help families out with the \$8 or \$10 or \$12 a month they need to get their full food stamp allotment.

And though the amounts given to individual families are very small—they have often meant survival to many of the thousands of people assisted in recent years.

That's why the NAACP Emergency Relief Fund needs your help so badly.

Every dollar you contribute is tax-deductible. And, on the average, every dollar we get converts into \$11 worth of food.

But we can't do it without *your* dollars. So please send what you can. Thanks.

NAACP Emergency Relief Fund
Dept. A6 Box 121, Radio City Station, New York, N.Y. 10019

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in which the United States is saved from a CIA putsch by a clean-limbed KGB hero.

JOURNALISTS ARE EMPLOYED to cast a cold eye on such passionately partisan sources. But the *Playboy* interviewer tells us of Agee's hotel room, which he describes as being "crowded with TV and newspaper reporters, publishers' representatives, leaders of citizens' groups, former intelligence officers, historians in search of CIA data."

Although Agee is the most conspicuous, he is only one of a number of CIA demonologists often accepted as straightforward muckrakers. The other two principal figures in this endeavor are John Marks and Victor Marchetti, two former intelligence officers who coauthored the best-seller *The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence*.

Together Agee, Marks, and Marchetti have considerably influenced the public perception of the CIA—through their books, TV and speaking appearances, and especially as sources for reporters. Here they sometimes rely on mutual corroboration.

Thus Agee quotes Marchetti in his *Playboy* interview as predicting "some revelations that will chill your spine, really grisly things. And some of them," he said, "may be connected with the assassinations of President Kennedy, Senator Kennedy, Martin Luther King, and other well-known individuals, both at home and abroad."

There is no empirical reason to choose between the quality of Agee's unsupported assertions and those of CIA spokesmen, and yet today's reporters choose to lap up the cant of one and don't bother even to submit the other to skeptical questioning.

The explanation lies in the nature of the political drama now playing. Since it seeks catharsis, its actors are permitted to don terrible masks, and to ad lib lines more horrifying than those in the script—the more horrifying, the better: *Playboy* thus assigns Fred Branfman, codirector of the Indochina Resource Center and as zealous an antiwar, antimilitary and anti-CIA activist as can be found, to describe the CIA's secret

war in Laos. No longer is the journalist just an advocate: the advocate becomes the journalist and cites anonymous sources to document grisly stories of CIA agents carrying bags filled with Laotian ears or air-freighting a sawed-off human head as a practical joke. All of this is permitted—at times encouraged—in the morality play.

But if a man does not follow the approved script, perhaps even going so far as to question the validity of the stock figures in the touring repertory company, he finds himself consigned to oblivion. Consider in this regard the experience of David Atlee Phillips, the other CIA operative who recently emerged from the shadows of the Agency. Phillips was the CIA chief of covert operations for Latin America. In the midst of a successful career, he announced his retirement, explaining that he could no longer in good conscience sit back and watch the CIA assailed from all quarters without anyone presenting the Agency's case. He would, therefore, become the CIA's public defender.

Phillips began his career as a junior case officer in the 1954 overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala. He had been in Lebanon the night before the U.S. Marines landed in 1958 and in Havana in 1959, when Batista fled Cuba; he was a high-ranking official at the time of the Bay of Pigs and played an even larger role in the Agency's massive effort during the 1965 U.S. intervention in the Dominican Republic. Finally, as CIA chief in the Western Hemisphere in 1973, he had been in charge of the last stage of the Agency's efforts to "destabilize" the Chilean government.

The press room at the Sheraton-Carlton Hotel in Washington was overflowing with reporters and TV camera crews for Phillips's first press conference last May, but they didn't quite know what questions to ask. Several sought assurances that Phillips was not undertaking an official propaganda mission; another asked him to describe all covert actions he had knowledge of. Everyone seemed disappointed that he didn't volunteer secrets embarrassing to the CIA.

Nonetheless, the story of Phillips's retirement was dutifully reported; he was asked to appear on several TV talk shows, and was given an oppor-

tunity to write an article for the Op-Ed page of the *New York Times*. And then Phillips dropped from sight. Reporters stopped calling for interviews, and he wasn't asked to appear on television. He spent the summer organizing an association of retired CIA agents—460 of them—and held the group's first meeting in Washington in September. An account was run the next day on the obituary page of the *Washington Post*.

Phillips had assumed that, even if no college community wanted to hear a defense of the CIA, it might welcome the opportunity to subject one of the Agency's foremost covert operators to questioning or debate. He sent a brochure containing his offer to 586 colleges. After five months, during which time he received several invitations from patriotic clubs, VFW halls, and the like, not one college expressed an interest. Equally disturbing to Phillips as his swift assignment to oblivion was the skepticism of such reporters as did deal with him. His first experience of this occurred during ABC's account of Frank Sturgis.

STURGIS WAS ONE of the Watergate burglars and before that a Marine, gunrunner, soldier of fortune, and all-round adventurer. He was also something of a publicity hound who had a history of telling his stories to Jack Anderson. It was not remarkable that the *New York Daily News* should print a series of articles on his alleged past exploits: what was slightly more surprising was Sturgis's boast that he had been a CIA "triple agent," involved in such sinister plots as the assassination of foreign leaders and the overthrow of governments in Cuba, Panama, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, and Haiti. Shortly after making these allegations, he was summoned before the Rockefeller Commission, to which he swore that he had never worked for the CIA. But then came ABC with its celebrated *Close-Up* documentary team to produce an hour special "to review the record of the Central Intelligence Agency."

Sturgis presented the documentarians with a dilemma: off camera he alluded to involvement in all sorts of CIA ventures, but on camera he wouldn't say that he had participated

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in CIA assassination plots; worse, he wouldn't even say that he had been a CIA agent. ABC solved the problem by saying it for him. ABC reporter David Schoumacher: "Frank Sturgis first came to our attention when he was arrested in the Watergate break-in. He first came to the CIA's attention many years before, one of Fidel Castro's trusted security men, but an agent working for the CIA. Did you, Frank, ever participate in any plots to kill Castro?" Sturgis: "Yes, I participated in several plots in Havana. Yes."

The CIA, learning of the interview a few days before the documentary's scheduled broadcast, asked ABC for an opportunity to disprove the Sturgis allegations. ABC, claiming satisfaction with its documentation, declined the offer. In the meantime, the *Close-Up* team had already sent a reporter and camera crew to Phillips's first press conference, the idea being to include portions of his remarks in its CIA special. The camera crew was there when Phillips emphatically asserted that "Frank Sturgis never worked for the CIA for one minute." When the documentary was finally broadcast, Sturgis was identified without qualification as a former CIA agent, and his allegation served as the show's most dramatic indictment against the CIA.

THINGS WERE MUCH the same, though in a more exaggerated form, during the McCarthy era, and we are just now seeing some of its victims such as John Paton Davies and John Henry Faulk emerging at long last from the cloud that was cast over their lives in that particular melodrama. The object then was to rid the country of the supposed malignancy of presumed Communist infiltration. In today's drama, the new enemy is seen as the secret powers of government, and the CIA is the symbolic target. The first clear-cut victim of this crusade is Alexander Butterfield.

Butterfield is the man whose candor led to the discovery of the tapes, and, some would say, ultimately to the ruin of Richard Nixon. This no doubt stimulated the imagination of Col. Fletcher Prouty, the elaborator of one of the more baroque con-

plexes of conspiracy currently to hand. Colonel Prouty, a former Air Force officer, served for a time as a liaison officer with the CIA. From that experience comes his book, *The Secret Team*, which endeavors to prove that the CIA runs the United States.

Colonel Prouty's theories attracted no serious attention until the wave of CIA revelations began to mount. Last July Prouty told Daniel Schorr of CBS and Ford Rowan of NBC that the CIA had placed a "contact officer" in the White House during the Nixon years, who was none other than Alexander Butterfield. And who had told Colonel Prouty? It was, he said, E. Howard Hunt.

Now, anyone who has followed Howard Hunt's statements throughout Watergate realizes that his record of veracity is questionable, and anyone who has read Colonel Prouty's book is aware that his theories of CIA influence are extreme. Nonetheless, NBC and CBS rushed accounts of the eerie disclosure onto the July 11 *Today* show and the *CBS Morning News*; soon the story was appearing throughout the country.

Neither network had called Butterfield or Hunt before rushing onto the air. Two days later, Butterfield went on CBS's *Sixty Minutes* and indignantly denied the allegation. Howard Hunt then denied having ever told any such story to Prouty, and Senator Church added that his committee had no evidence for it. By that time, however, Butterfield, CIA officer or not, had been stigmatized.

The Butterfield episode is the most glaring exercise in unchecked credulity to date in the press's CIA coverage, but the country's papers seem to launch minor flights of fancy virtually every week. Stories of CIA laser bugging devices painted onto the White House walls, of CIA officials having sat in on meetings with Oswald in which Kennedy's assassination was discussed, stories which surface for a day, register in readers' minds and then disappear from sight. Most anything that will add to the drama yet not deviate from the story line is admissible for a walk-on part.

But why is this necessary? Is it not gilding the lily to try to improve on the CIA's own venality—in its Mafia contracts to assassinate Castro, its machinations to poison Lumumba, its domestic spying, its drug testing,

poison-caching, and who knows what else? There is mischief in all of this as well, for in escalating a legitimate controversy into political theater it becomes far less likely that a sensible course of action will be pursued to correct the abuses being investigated. What is emerging is a picture of the CIA as an almost supernatural power, able to work its will on the nation and the world. The obvious corrective to this perceived reality would be the liquidation of the beast. But what if the CIA has all along been an instrument and reflection of Presidential policy? The corrective might then only yield us a new monster with a different name—such as the Plumbers.

There is a final irony to the nature and style of the press-CIA confrontation that is taking place today. The James Bond heroes of the popular spy thrillers of the early 1960s captured the imagination of the American reading public as the romantic saviors of liberty in the world. Like the investigative journalist of today, the Bond-type spy operated alone and in secret, infiltrating powerful and sinister organizations with the willingness to use unsavory methods if necessary to subvert their evil intent. Now Bond has become the enemy, and the investigative journalist, his spiritual successor, is charged with the task of rooting the power-drunk spy out of his lair and exposing his corruption to the world.

It is worth recalling, as the press pursues this latest of its crusades, the fate of the CIA. It isn't in trouble today because of the ends it sought. Those were, more often than not, noble ones, such as making the world safe for democracy. It was, rather, the means it chose to use and for too long was allowed to use unchecked either by its political masters or by press inquiry. The press now adopts the same tone of uncompromising and embattled idealism with which young agents went into secret battle a generation ago. The world is not so simple and easy a place that any enterprise as self-righteous as the CIA or the American press will long be honest with itself. Christian and Moslem alike came to curse the Crusades. □

George Crile III, a contributing editor of Harper's, is at work on a book about the CIA, to be published in the spring by Harper's Magazine Press.