

Underground for the C.I.A. in New York: An Ex-Agent Tells of Spying on Students

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By SEYMOUR M. HERSH

A former agent for the Central Intelligence Agency, in recounting the details of his undercover career, says that New York City became a prime C.I.A. domestic spying target during the late nineteen-sixties because it was considered a "big training ground" for radical activities in the United States.

The agent, who spent more than four years in the late nineteen-sixties and early seventies spying on radical groups in New York, told The New York Times that more than 25 C.I.A. agents were assigned to the city at the height of antiwar activity at Columbia University and elsewhere.

The agents were tightly controlled by senior officials in the New York office of the Domestic Operations Division.

little-known domestic unit set up in 1964 by the C.I.A. in more than a dozen cities across the nation, the former intelligence official said.

The division's ostensible function then was legal: to coordinate with the American corporations supplying "cover" for C.I.A. agents abroad and to aid in the interrogation of American travelers after their return from foreign countries.

Began in 1967

The former agent's description of life as a domestic C.I.A. spy was provided during a series of interviews last week. The contact with The Times came after publication last Sunday of the first account of the massive spying.

The former agent said that his involvement began with the advent of the Black Pan-

increase of antiwar dissent during the last months of the Johnson Administration. "And then it started to snowball from there," the former agent said.

The Times, working with details supplied by the former agent, was able to verify that he served as an undercover intelligence spy, although it was impossible to check all of his information.

The former C.I.A. agent insisted on anonymity, saying that if he was exposed he would be forced to publicly deny any link to the agency.

A high-ranking Government intelligence official with intimate knowledge of C.I.A. operations said yesterday that the former agent's description of life as a domestic spy "seemed a little bit far out." But the

Continued on Page 22, Col. 2

Continued From Page 1, Col. 3

official added that he was unable to deny any of the agent's specific allegations, pending a check of files.

The Times, quoting well-placed sources, reported last Sunday that the C.I.A. had violated its charter by conducting massive and illegal intelligence operations aimed at antiwar and other American dissidents inside the United States. Intelligence files on at least 10,000 American citizens also were compiled, the sources said.

Wiretaps and Break-ins

The former intelligence agent said that he and other C.I.A. agents had also participated in telephone wiretaps and break-ins in their efforts to closely monitor the activities of radicals in New York. He added that the C.I.A. had supplied him with "more than 40" psychological assessments of radical leaders during his spy career.

High-ranking C.I.A. officials, including Richard Helms, the former Director of Central Intelligence and now Ambassador to Iran, told Congress in the wake of the Watergate scandals that only two such assessments—done by psychiatrists working for the agency—have ever been prepared on American citizens.

"What we were trying to do," the former C.I.A. agent said in an interview, "was to find out what the radicals were marketing and to learn if they had any new products."

"They were a target company and we were like another company in competition," he added. "We were interested in their executives and that's why we did the profiles, so we could learn what we'd have to offer in order to buy them over to us."

Police Function Barred

The 1947 legislation setting up the C.I.A. bars the agency from any security or police function inside the United States, leaving all such activity to the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

"I knew what the charter was," the former agent said. "I'd read it, but my belief was that we were doing the same function inside the United States as the C.I.A. does outside it."

The agent said he had been recruited into the C.I.A. after graduation from college in 1965. After training in counterintelligence techniques, his first assignment was with the Domestic Operations Division office in New York.

The former agent reported that he did not have direct involvement in New York with members of the C.I.A.'s counterintelligence staff, which was headed until last week by James Angleton. The agent said that the counterintelligence activities were normally conducted at higher bureaucratic and security levels than his.

Traditional Role

Traditionally, the counterintelligence department of the C.I.A. has sought to neutralize and expose Soviet and other foreign intelligence agents seeking to operate against the C.I.A. in the United States and elsewhere in the world.

The retirement of Mr. Angleton, a veteran of 31 years of intelligence service, became known Monday, a day after The Times article was published.

A number of well-informed C.I.A. sources subsequently confirmed that the bulk of the actual domestic spying throughout the United States was conducted by various offices of the Domestic Operations Division, which was initially assigned to such tasks in the

mid-nineteen-sixties as infiltrating agents into various ethnic and emigre groups in large cities.

"When I first came to D.O.D." the former agent said, "it was a low-key operation. Mostly we did liaison" with other intelligence agencies.

'Pain in the Neck'

"And then someone started noticing those kids," the former agent said, referring to the antiwar activities. "At first they were just a pain in the neck. The local police and F.B.I. couldn't handle it. We had the manpower and the money."

In the beginning, he said, only files on student dissenters were kept, apparently as an addition to the already existing dossiers on the various foreign students living in the New York area.

"The first actual [physical] surveillance came when people like Mark Rudd started moving around," he said. Mr. Rudd was a leader in the student demonstrations that disrupted Columbia University for two weeks in the spring of 1968.

"We had different I.D.s for different jobs. We'd use newspaper I.D.s, or flash-a badge and say we were a reporter for a magazine—it made things a lot easier."

There were certain necessary precautions, he added. "If something happened in New York City, you couldn't say you were an A.P. [Associated Press] or New York Times reporter. We'd usually use Newsday. Atlantic Monthly was another good cover—no one ever heard of it."

Psychological Profiles

The former agent said that the Domestic Operations Division ordered psychological profiles on Mr. Rudd "and others we felt were not just idealistic kids."

"And then we started wondering where the money was coming from," he said, refer-

ring to student protest movement. "My theory and my belief is that much of the money was coming from the K.G.B. [the Soviet, secret intelligence agency]."

One of the Domestic Operations Division's first functions was to attempt to infiltrate its agents into a radical unit targeted for domestic spying, the former C.I.A. man said. A second major goal was to "turn somebody around"—that is, convince a member of a group to become an informer.

"I could never identify myself as a C.I.A. man," the former agent said. "I always had

to be a student or whatever I felt like at the time. You couldn't say you were a cop, because you might be talking to a cop."

Monitored by Superiors

The former agent repeatedly noted during the interviews that his activities were closely monitored by his superiors, some of whom maintained a "cover" office inside a large corporate headquarters.

Asked whether he ever questioned his work, the former agent replied, "Look—they [his superiors] were telling us, 'Keep an eye on them,' and to do that you're going to have to infringe on somebody's freedom."

"We got the policy from above," he added, "but we all felt the same way."

"These kids were directly involved with foreign stuff," the former agent continued. "We always worried about drugs from Communist China, K.G.B. agents and foreign guns. That's

what gave us the right to come in."

In previous interviews, United States intelligence officials have characterized all of the C.I.A.'s domestic activities as being directly related to foreign espionage.

He repeatedly quoted what he said was a "catch-all phrase" around the New York domestic operations office—"intelligence is where you find it."

Helms Used Phrase

He said he and his colleagues first heard the phrase used by Mr. Helms on a training film supplied by the C.I.A. headquarters that had been shown during a staff meeting sometime in 1968.

The former C.I.A. agent recalled being assigned to take a photograph of a young woman believed to be associated with radical leaders. "They gave us a Minolta 101 camera," he said, "and told us where she lived and when to expect her. And we snapped some pictures from a parked car as she came by, shooting right through a window."

"We were interested in the kids who were training her and then were going to send her to other cities," he said. "It seemed that New York was a big training ground for cells in other cities."

'A Very Hot Target'

Asked how the C.I.A.'s domestic espionage targets were determined, the former agent said that it "depended on the individual" under suspicion.

"If we felt that a person was working for an agency not to our liking," he said, he became

a suspect to be placed under surveillance. As the antiwar and other dissident movements became more outspoken, he added, "any organization that advocated overthrow of the Constitution became a very hot target for us."

By the time he left the agency in early 1972, he continued, his unit's domestic files were huge. "At the end," he said, "we were working on antiwar professors and attorneys. We'd figured out a way to log and map up the whole world."

"The goal of our operation," he said, "was to find out beforehand what they [radicals] were going to go—it was preventative. We just wanted to find out what they were up to and pass it on."

'Professors Were Great'

In that regard, the former C.I.A. man said, "the professors were great. They wanted to work with you."

"A professor," he added, "no matter how liberal he was—he was mad. He didn't want those kids to tell them how to run his university."

After the disturbances at Columbia, the former agent said, he was given an opportunity to infiltrate a local chapter of Students for a Democratic Society.

"I had no qualms when I was asked," he recalled. "In a way I thought it was almost a promotion. I figured that if I did real good, maybe I could get out of the country"—that is, an overseas agency assignment.

"I went undercover for four and a half months," he said.

After the bombings and other violent disturbances allegedly committed by the Weathermen, the former agent said, being an undercover agent "got scary."

"Before it was like a game," he added, "but later, if you were blown [identified], you didn't know what the kids would do to you."

He and other undercover men in his unit worked closely together, he said, and even were sent on special out-of-town trips together.

"We got called when those black students took over Cornell," he recalled. "About 12 or 13 of us went up there and looked around. We took some pictures but not much happened."

He told how various members of his unit in the Domestic Operations Division, all of whom had fixed assignments, would respond to an emergency.

"Suppose we had two infiltrators in the Rudd group and

we got a call saying there was trouble. We'd set up a commo [communications] van nearby, with the commo gear and some weapons." [The van also included photographs of the infiltrators for easy spotting.]

Other Activities

"Everyone then had a different job. The back-up people would join the pro-Rudd forces at the demonstration, so now you had people all around Rudd. Their job would be to watch in case something went wrong so they would be able to pull out the infiltrators [who were always C.I.A. men]."

"The others would take photographs. We reported to the van, and I assume that the intelligence was put together there and sent to the New York office and then on to Washington."

The former agent was less eager to discuss other activities that he and his colleagues took part in—such as illegal bugging and break-ins.

A lot of outside wiretaps were not needed, he said, because "if you were on an infiltration and if the phone was in your name, you could get the kids to talk on the phone and give us permission for taps."

When telephone taps were needed, he said, advance authority was always necessary except in emergency situations.

In most cases, he said, the inside wiretaps were put in place only after an informer or infiltrator gave advance word of an important telephone contact that was pending. "If the call was booked—let's say between 10 and 11 at night at some house, you'd intercept the line for only that hour," he said. "But you had to have an inside man who knew when the call was coming."

'A True Situation'

In addition to telephone wiretaps, the former agent said, he and his colleagues occasionally would use sophisticated boom microphones capable of picking up an outside conversation hundreds of feet away.

With a laugh, the former agent noted that he had seen "The Conversation," a recent movie dealing with an electronic snooping expert. "You know," he said, "I had a funny

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feeling that it was describing a true situation."

Physical break-ins were also used by the domestic C.I.A. agents, he said, and those, too, required prior approval from his superiors. The former agent was unable to say whether his superiors, in turn, had to seek higher authority for such activities.

"This was a well-organized operation," he said. "I reported back to my superior regularly. There were times when he called me regularly at night."

"Those fellows overseas," he added, speaking of C.I.A. men posted in foreign countries, "had a lot more play than we did."

Escaped Police Detection

Asked how the C.I.A. men, with their vans and undercover agents, could escape detection by other police agencies in New York City, the former agent said, "We'd bump into the F.B.I. guys, but they didn't know who we were." He and his colleagues also were under carefully arranged cover, he said, and could produce identification papers showing that they were employes on the current payroll of a New York corporation.

One high-ranking New York City police official, asked yesterday about the former agent's account, acknowledged that he and others in his special unit "had always assumed that the C.I.A. had been involved here."

The official said there were many indirect hints and clues of the C.I.A. activity during the height of the antiwar protests, "but we had nothing hard to go on."

Ford Considering Special C.I.A. Panel

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Dec. 28 — President Ford has under consideration a proposal to establish a public commission to investigate allegations of illegal domestic surveillance by the Central Intelligence Agency.

The proposal came from Secretary of State Kissinger and others both inside and outside the Administration with a belief that a public forum would help halt the controversy over C.I.A. activities and lay the groundwork for a careful review of the agency's alleged domestic spying operations, according to one informed Government official.

This official said the names of citizens who would serve on a blue ribbon panel already have been discussed, and that he believed that the "people at Vail" (in Colorado where the President is on vacation) would accept some form of Mr. Kissinger's recommendations. There was no indication here of who might be named to such a panel.

Douglas Called a Target

In another development, Time magazine contended in its latest issue that Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas and former Representative Cornelius

Gallagher, Democrat of New Jersey, were among four political figures who were put under C.I.A. surveillance. Time said the others were the late Senator Edward V. Long, Democrat of Missouri and Representative Claude Pepper, a Democrat who was said to have been "apparently suspect because of his contacts with Cuban refugees living in his Congressional district" in Florida.

The Government official said Mr. Kissinger "doesn't have any idea that he can head off any congressional investigation" with a public commission. "Henry's view, I think is, of course that Congress can investigate as it should, but that doesn't absolve the Administration from investigating itself," he said.

"Obviously, if we did nothing but step back and watch everybody else investigate the C.I.A. without doing something about it ourselves, that would be criticized, too."

Mr. Kissinger apparently relayed his views to President Ford who has with him a 50-page report on allegations of C.I.A. domestic activities from William E. Colby, Director of

Central Intelligence. The White House has said that Mr. Ford is considering whether to make public any or all of the report.

Close Survey of C.I.A.

Opposed by Goldwater

PHOENIX, Ariz., Dec. (AP) — Congress will be making "a big mistake" if it undertakes too strong an investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency for alleged domestic spying, Senator Barry Goldwater, Republican of Arizona, said today.

Mr. Goldwater, holding his annual news conference from his home, said that he had no knowledge of domestic spying but that the C.I.A. should be allowed to keep "domestic subversives" under surveillance.

"I don't think anybody could say we don't have some people who wouldn't want to overthrow the Government," he said. "It would want to know more about the background of people like Daniel Ellsberg and what's behind them."

He also said that he could not support Vice President Rockefeller for the Republican Presidential nomination in 1976, but "would be active in support" of Gov. Ronald Reagan of California.