

500 Hear Ex-State Dept. Worker

Illegal CIA Activities Detailed On Campus

The CIA "is weaker now than it has ever been" as a result of increased public awareness of its activities, an intelligence specialist said here Wednesday night.

"They're wounded and they're on the run," according to John Marks. "If you keep up the pressure on them, you can put them out of business. We're a year or two away from winning on this issue."

Marks, who addressed about 500 persons at the Wisconsin Union Theater, was formerly assistant to the State Department's intelligence director. He co-authored the book, "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence."

One of the more colorful CIA adventures that Marks alleged was that the CIA deluged African natives with specially-treated "Chairman Mao" buttons that "caused people's clothes to fall apart when they put a button."

Other reported activities, such as blowing up churches in Ecuador so the left would be blamed, condoning torture and murder, and blackmailing people into becoming informants, were not so amusing.

Marks refuted the idea that CIA agents are "supermen." They often bungle their efforts, he assured his audience.

"They are quite good, but they're not as good as some people think. Some people see the CIA under every bush — that's not true."

The CIA's probably not under more than one in every three bushes," said Marks.

The CIA gives its people courses in such basics as burglary and opening mail, he said. Noting that many Americans seem surprised to learn the CIA has been employing its talents within this country, he asked:

"What do you expect? We're teaching these guys to be criminals. Sometime they're going to come home from overseas, if only to retire. Only they don't always retire — some go to work at the White House, others hire out to the highest bidder," he said.

"I don't see the CIA as an omnipotent force," Marks emphasized. And I don't think they're out of control — that is very much a myth. The CIA is under the control of Henry Kissinger and the President of the United States."

Later, asked to amplify on this, Marks said the President oversees "major foreign adventures" on the CIA's part but cannot know about all of its day-to-day activities.

Watergate was a major breakthrough because it "destroyed the myth of national security" that previously had been effectively used to cover up all sorts of illegal governmental actions, Marks said.

He speculated that the CIA is no longer spying on Americans: "They're afraid they'll see it in the New York Times under a five-column headline."

Wednesday night's session was part of a three-day symposium sponsored by the underground newspaper Take Over and the Wisconsin Student Association.

Appearing with Marks was Doug Porter of the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate, Washington, D.C., who spoke on domestic surveillance by the FBI.

Franklin Roosevelt first "turned the FBI loose on the American people" in 1936 by authorizing surveillance that was not directly aimed at criminal prosecution, Porter said. Later, during the McCarthy era, "the FBI really got into the swing of things," with massive infiltration of the Communist Party in the U.S.

The CIA bought thousands of subscriptions to the Daily Worker in order to keep the Communist Party alive so it could be watched, according to Porter. He said it was estimated that at one time, one in five party members was an FBI informant.

Later, the FBI's attention turned to the civil rights movement and then to the radical movement. People were blackmailed, reputations were smeared, and lives were ruined, he said.

Porter said the FBI had financed a right-wing para-military organization that terrorized the left in California. The organization's downfall came after it firebombed a pornography theater: three policemen happened to be inside at the time.

He told his audience of mostly young people, "You cannot allow yourself to be paralyzed by the thought that your phone might be tapped. The chances are your phone isn't bugged."

"Of course, I don't say you should go home and call Detroit and order 150 pounds of heroin," he added.

In conclusion, Porter offered this succinct advice:

"When you can demonstrate conclusively that you've been spied on, sue the bastards."

Among the alleged CIA activities discussed by Marks were the following:

- CIA agents were said to be operating on over 100 American university campuses, making efforts to recruit foreign students who would then work for the CIA when they returned to their native countries and assumed influential positions.

- CIA infiltration of the international labor movement was said to be heavy, with the AFL-CIO acting as a "front" for CIA activities.

- Close ties were said to exist between the CIA and United States businesses that operate overseas. Marks observed that "after all, the CIA is trying to make the world safe for American corporations," so the corporations are glad to cooperate.

- Until recently, the CIA had great influence over the press, often managing to get stories killed on request. "The press," said Marks, "didn't want to know what was going on. The press was part of the team."

- The CIA reportedly operates a vast network of false-front companies through which it earns hundreds of millions of dollars a year. For example, Marks said the CIA owns one of the largest fleets of airplanes in the world, and when it is not using the planes, they are chartered out. Prominent businessmen are persuaded to serve on boards of directors of such enterprises "to give them some legitimacy," he said.

It is in the Third World that the CIA is "hell on wheels," according to the speaker.

"The CIA has been supporting the status quo in these countries," he claimed. "It sides with the elite against the masses. Whenever progressivism raises its ugly head, it gets stamped out."

Tonight's session, which will also be at the Union, will feature Carl Oglesby, author of "Containment and Change." It is scheduled for 8 p.m. and will be free to the public, contrary to earlier plans to charge an admission fee.