

# Why the CIA will tell the nothing but the truth

It is usually dangerous to make early predictions about the outcome of governmental investigations, especially when their subject has been cloaked in secrecy then further obscured by masses of published misinformation, but the current witch-hunt against the Central Intelligence Agency may prove an exception.

Already, Washington's insiders think they see how it will come out. It seems to be pointing to a surprise ending like those of Agatha Christie's murder mysteries. The chief suspects may turn out to have been accomplices of the detectives and the characters who were such honest chaps in early parts of the books are turning out to have been the villains.

Here, in an only slightly oversimplified summary, is the emerging scenario:

● Having no member who is a "champion of civil liberties", the President's "blue ribbon commission" will be unable to provide findings acceptable to the Congressmen and crusading journalists who are attacking the CIA—although, for what it is worth, the findings will be acceptable to the large majority of American people. As those of us who have recently toured the country promoting books about the CIA learned, the interest of America's "silent majority" in this subject is one of curiosity rather than worry—and, anyway, there is little

yearning for a "champion of civil liberties" in a country where the likes of Daniel Ellsberg, Victor Marchetti and Philip Agee can win fame and fortune by exposing the secrets of the very agency against which the championing is to be done.

In any case, how the great American public feels about the CIA is at the moment of little concern to those who are out to "get" it. So is the fact that in Britain or any other country in the world those who expose the secrets of the nation's intelligence organization wind up behind bars.

● Because the blue ribbon commission has on it no "champion of civil liberties" and is composed exclusively of senior citizens whose discretion and integrity is above question, Agency members and alumni will tell it the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. "We're going to give them the truth about everything," an old colleague told me, "even about matters they won't know to bring up. By the time we're through with them they will have had the most thorough tram course on the CIA anyone has ever had on what the Agency is supposed to do, what the dangers are of our not doing it, and what we are doing, good, bad and indifferent."

There will be no "withholding of information," the whole point of the exercise being to

give commission members total confidence in their findings. When the blue ribbon hearings are over, the CIA will have as allies a group of men with tremendous prestige and power, representing a cross-section of American society and having such a depth of understanding of the Agency's affairs and problems that they can relieve CIA witnesses of the burden of deciding, for themselves, what should and what should not be revealed to later investigating committees.

● Thus, when it comes time to face the congressional committees, Agency members will unhesitatingly "withhold information"—or even lie outright—when, with the backing of their new allies, they feel it is in the public interest that they do so. "Suppose", an Agency member said to me, "I am asked by someone on Senator Church's committee if it is true that such-and-such an Arab leader is secretly cooperating with us to bring about an Arab-Israeli peace, should I tell him the truth? If I say 'Yes' or 'Sorry, but that's secret information' there'll be newspaper headlines the next day which will end the cooperation, destroy the poor Arab, and teach other Arab leaders the unwisdom of cooperating with Americans. So if I'm asked a question like that I'll lie in my teeth and consider I'm doing my patriotic duty."

● Even with the CIA's wit-

# truth, the whole truth and to keep its secrets

nesses "withholding information", Congressional investigators will get enough information on dangers to the nation to make them wonder if they've not been fretting over the wrong questions. They will be briefed on the increased technical capabilities of terrorist groups, "sleepers" in our transportation systems, public utilities and ports who could paralyse the nation's military capabilities in the event of any showdown with Russia, and on other means by which "the opposition" hopes to achieve the Leninist goal: "Do not attack until you have removed the enemy's capacity for counter-attack."

Agency briefers whose records establish them as cold-blooded analysts, rather than fanatical cold warriors, will also convey to the Congressmen an understanding of another point: the "Leninoid demonology" requires "a CIA". If one didn't exist, it would have to be created. By coincidence or design, the pattern of attacks on the CIA is exactly what it would be were it the result of a master scheme. In these days of "upside down McCarthyism" one dares not say such things publicly for fear of being called a "fanatical cold warrior", and the Congressmen to whom I suggested that the Agency might just possibly be right on this point instantly replied that it was "hysterical nonsense".

My Agency friends assure me, though, that even the most sceptical Congressmen will change their tune in the course of the briefings.

● In any case, with respect to what the Agency has done, abroad or domestically, this realization is going to strike the Congressional investigators: all of it would have had the full approval of any Congressional "watchdog" committee which might conceivably have existed. There would have been but one difference: instead of the CIA's being all alone in its current troubles it would have had the company of the Congressmen on the committee.

Such a realization is bound to dampen the Congressmen's enthusiasm for abandoning secrecy laws and relaxing the security screenings of civil servants having access to official secrets. Once he learns what sort of activities he may be called upon to approve, no Congressman in his right mind would serve on a watchdog committee unless he is assured that the secrets which will inevitably come his way have complete security protection—even if this means surveillances sometimes border on "spying". Moreover, as the result of the briefings they will get, the Congressional investigators will recognize "community surveillance" as an inescapable need, and they will regard the question of whether or not the CIA should have any part in it

as constructionist and trifling.

Their distaste for it, however, may cause them to insist that it be entirely in the hands of an agency with these qualifications: ability to operate efficiently and inconspicuously, lack of police powers or other powers which might cause it to develop into a Gestapo, and means of storing information so securely that it cannot be leaked to outsiders who might misuse it. An American "MI5" in other words.

Unfortunately, an old Agency man told the blue ribbon commission, "the CIA is the oil better than the FBI".

So what, when we get right down to it, has the fuss been all about? My friends in Langley are convinced that this is the real question. Agency officials concede that the *New York Times* Seymour Hersh is motivated by nothing more sinister than a desire to get ahead of his *Washington Post* rivals and win himself a Pulitzer Prize, but they think he and others may have been caught up in that "master scheme" they will be telling the blue ribbon commission and the Congressional committees about. This is at least a possibility worth considering.

**Miles Copeland**

*The author's book on the CIA, The Real Spy World, is published this week by Weidenfeld and Nicolson, price £3.50.*  
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## The KGB's 'Safe House'

Thus far only one fact of real importance has emerged from the rumpus about domestic surveillance by the CIA and FBI. This country, in fact, turns out to be shockingly vulnerable to the Soviet Union's ruthless, omnipresent KGB because of a shockingly incompetent and ill-advised counter-intelligence system.

As an illustration, consider the truly bizarre ukase issued by the late J. Edgar Hoover toward the end of the 1960s. By order, the director of the FBI provided a gigantic, gloriously convenient "safe house" for the KGB's all too numerous agents and any other spies happening to be in Washington.

A "safe house," of course, is the intelligence community's lable for a place where foreign agents can meet their local contacts in perfect security to make payoffs or to transmit orders or to pick up information. Just to add an extra touch of fantasy, the Hoover-provided safe house was no less than the second center of the U.S. government, the huge U.S. Capitol with all its grounds and dependencies.

Under the terms of the Hoover ukase, the Capitol complex was put strictly off-limits for all the FBI's counterintelligence men. Yet the FBI has a legal monopoly on all counter-intelligence within the territorial limits of the United States. Hence Hoover's ukase meant that known Soviet spies, who were known to be about to make an American contact known to be dangerous, could still be sure of doing so with perfect impunity—provided they just named a rendezvous in the off-limits part of Capitol Hill.

All this seemed downright incredible to me when it was first reported by Ron Kessler of The Washington Post. My own check has fully sustained Kessler's story, however. There is only one significant point that remains in some doubt. It is no more than 95 per cent certain that the Hoover ukase remains in full force and that the Capitol, therefore, continues to be a KGB safe house. That 95 per cent certainty is too close for comfort, one must add.

Furthermore, I think I know why Hoover issued his ukase. For background, you must first understand that the KGB maintains an enormous number of spies in this country. As a measure, remember that we are priority No. 1, whereas Great Britain is no more than priority No. 4. Yet when the KGB grew over-bold in Britain, the Foreign Office had to expell 105 well-authenticated KGB men.

Second, you must understand that

with such ample human resources, the KGB has long given a lot of its men part-time or full-time assignments on Capitol Hill. By the mid-1960s, there were somewhere between 20 and 30 KGB men dealing with the U.S. Congress or with the countless staff people the Congress and its committees employ.

This does not mean that KGB were constantly seeing senators and representatives. On the contrary, they were known to concentrate rather heavily on the lawmakers' personal staffs and also on the committee staffs.

But this is almost a distinction without a difference. Nowadays, in truth, domineering and able staff members largely control the thoughts and acts of all too many lawmakers, especially in the Senate. Great numbers of left of center staff members on the Senate side of the Capitol also constitute a quasi-independent power bloc. They all work together, all protect one another and often join to extend their

*Joseph Alsop, who until the first of the year wrote a syndicated column that appeared on the opposite page three times a week, is now writing a syndicated monthly column. This is the second of Mr. Alsop's new columns.*

bloc's power by planting friends and allies in new senatorial offices.

I myself believe that this unknown, unseen power bloc is an unhealthy new political growth. Yet I must hasten to add that it was *not* and is *not* necessarily improper for these people—or indeed for anyone else on Capitol Hill—to see the KGB men who have swarmed there for so long. The KGB men, of course, were all masquerading, and still are masquerading, as Tass correspondents, embassy secretaries, trade experts and so on.

Particularly on the left of the political spectrum, however, the FBI watch that J. Edgar Hoover staffed with his ukase showed an astonishing number of KGB contacts on Capitol Hill. It would have looked remarkably bad if anyone had made a public issue of them. Furthermore, President Johnson was tempted to do just that toward the end of his second term, and President Nixon actively wished to do just that in 1969.

It was about then that the Hoover ukase was issued. I feel sure, therefore, the aim was to suspend the FBI's former careful watch on the Capitol in order to be protected from Congress if the White House went too far in its revelations.

So there you have it—a horrifying story which is pretty likely to be going on this minute. The story is horrifying, of course, because foreign espionage is a damnably serious business, even in a free society like ours.

It is so serious, in turn, because it is

dangerous to have a government, a press, an academic world and the ranks of science all bristling with people like Kim Philbey; Guy Burgess and Donald MacLean. I hope and think this is not our situation; but this is certainly the situation the KGB has been going all out to produce ever since the United States became the unique giant power in our half of the world.

If you reflect upon this story, you find that its main lesson is the singularly unprofessional character of the FBI approach to counterintelligence—at any rate under the leadership of the aging J. Edgar Hoover. Nor is this at all surprising. To have truly professional counterintelligence you have to know the story from the beginning, which is in Moscow in the case of the KGB.

The CIA, of course, is supposed to know all about Moscow. But another appalling revelation of the current CIA-FBI rumpus is the bloody bitterness of the FBI-CIA feud. The two agencies never worked together until new liaison arrangements were made by new leaders a year ago. This kind of crippling non-cooperation can too easily recur, too.

Again, the rumpus has glaringly revealed the recurring dominance of domestic politics in the FBI counterintelligence work, at any rate in the Hoover era. It was politics that caused the former FBI director to create the KGB safe house. It was politics, too, that caused him to ignore President Johnson's order to have a look at the peace movement's foreign links, thereby spurring Johnson to call in the CIA.

In short, the foolish may credit the argument that the CIA-FBI rumpus has uncovered a grave threat to our civil liberties. But more sensible people will instead perceive an open invitation to the KGB.