

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

"The KGB's 'Safe House'" *Post 3/5/75*

Joseph Alsop's column, "The KGB's 'Safe House'" in the February 24 Washington Post asserts that "domineering and . . . left of center Senate staff aides . . . are controlling the thoughts and acts of all too many lawmakers" and constitute "a quasi-independent power bloc." This is such a self-evident proposition to Mr. Alsop that he doesn't bother to offer a shred of documentation for it.

Moreover, he says, this group—"this unknown, unseen (indeed!) power bloc" is being visited by Tass correspondents, Soviet embassy employees and others who are in reality KGB agents. The FBI has been derelict in not keeping these encounters under surveillance, and as a result the U.S. Capitol is infested with spies.

The implication is plain and nasty: anybody who is "left of center" is a potential KGB accomplice and needs to be watched.

What does Mr. Alsop mean by "left of center" anyway? People who favored the end of the Vietnam war? Those who favor detente? Arms limitation? In short, anyone who disagrees with Mr. Alsop? If that is the case, Mr. Alsop has a bigger problem than he imagines, since the majority of Americans—according to the polls—also disagree with Mr. Alsop and favor the policies cited above, and presumably need to be watched, too.

The trouble with Mr. Alsop's fantasy world is that only foreign communism

is seen as undermining our institutions. Surveillance of our legislators and their staffs by a secret, unaccountable police force is not seen as a danger; or the collection of damaging dossiers based on hearsay; or the reckless labelling of dissenters as conspirators; or the infiltration of government spies into legitimate private organizations. All of these violations of our rights to privacy, to freedom of expression and to freedom of association are airily dismissed: ". . . the foolish may credit the argument that the CIA-FBI rum-pus has uncovered a grave threat to our civil liberties."

Well, along with millions of other Americans, I do not think it is foolish to believe that violation of our fundamental constitutional rights does more to subvert our institutions than any external threat; or to believe that if the abuses of the FBI and the CIA are not exposed and checked, these secret agencies will become as powerful and repressive in the United States as the KGB is in Russia. Finally, I believe that the Congress of the United States, as the people's freely elected representatives, has the right and the duty to oversee and control the CIA and the FBI, and not, as in Mr. Alsop's upside-down and profoundly undemocratic scheme, the other way around.

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