

Bizarre 'Plot' Is Denied

A CIA Non-Caper Inside British Labor

By ^{1/23/77} ~~Bernard D. Kossiter~~

Washington Post Foreign Service

LONDON, Jan. 22—The bizarre tale of CIA agents protecting Britons from their own security negligence today blew up in the letters column of The Times of London.

The destruct button was pushed by Miles Copeland, the American source of the original account and a self-described "consultant" for the Central Intelligence Agency. Copeland wrote The Times, "I had no facts of my own to corroborate the information" he gave the paper. But, he went on, if his story was not true, it should be.

The curious caper began last Friday when The Times ran at the top of page one a story headlined: "CIA men in Britain checking on subver-

sion." The tale, essentially an interview with Copeland, disclosed that "between 30 and 40 extra American intelligence men have been drafted to Britain since the present state of emergency was introduced."

Their mission, Copeland told Christopher Walker, The Times reporter, was to ferret out subverters, particularly in British trade unions.

"Rightly or wrongly," Copeland was quoted as saying, "the top men in the CIA be-

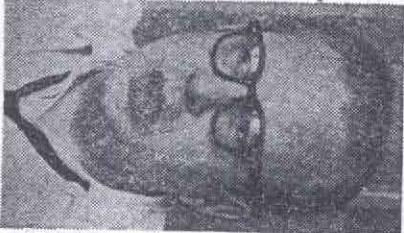
lieve that the present spate of strikes in Britain has far more sinister motives than the mere winning of extra wages. They believe that the aim is to bring about a situation in which it would be impossible for the kind of democratic government you continue to enjoy here.... There is no doubt at all that it [the CIA] has agents operating inside the British labor unions....

The CIA has been trying to convince the British for some time about the power of subverters within the unions.... The present state of Britain makes it a professional troublemaker's dream."

The Times did not report that Copeland, 57, makes a living in London advising what he says are multinational American corporations on "security problems." Nor did the newspaper disclose that Copeland has co-authored a novel entitled "Black September" for which, he says, Simon & Schuster has paid an advance of \$70,000.

When The Times story appeared, the American embassy here said that it "is so outside the area of truth that it must be denied categorically."

The next day, Louis Heren, The Times' deputy editor for foreign news and former



MILES COPELAND
...unspokesman

Washington correspondent, wrote a signed front-page article describing such denials as "automatic and understandable."

Heren suggested that the CIA was only doing its duty, that "From Washington, Britain must now be beginning to look like a Central American banana republic.... It must seem that the Government is incapable of governing. Militant trade unionists are in direct confrontation with authority."

Today, however, Copeland

confessed that his tale was a classic case of the wish fathering the thought.

He wrote:

"On the evening of January 16, I reviewed with Christopher Walker the information which provided the basis for his story on CIA men in Britain. Although I had no facts of my own with which to corroborate the information, it made sense to me in the light of my background knowledge of the war of the spooks....

"I have chilling suspicions that the United States embassy might be speaking the truth in that pompous denial it issued on Friday and that the CIA really is in this instance as delinquent in the performance of its assigned duties as the denial claims. I hope my suspicions turn out to be unfounded.... Both Black September and the IRA have boasted that 1974 is to be 'the year of the killing.'"

More prosaic intelligence sources here never took Copeland's yarn seriously. They said that even the CIA which sometimes acts without considering political consequences, must know that industrial action by coal miners and railway engineers here does not reflect a plot to over-

throw the government but simply a wish for more money in the case of the miners, and preservation of the engineers as a separate craft in the case of the railwaymen.

These sources, however, did say that Copeland had revealed a bureaucratic fact of marginal significance, that the CIA office here has put on a few additional men. But this expansion was attributed to the importance of the new station chief, Cord Meyer, rather than any increased activity. Meyer is the high CIA official credited with the ill-fated plan in the 1960s to, buy up, through foundation funds, leaders in the American National Students Association and several American trade unions.

As for Copeland, he first achieved notoriety with the publication of "The Game of Nations," a purportedly factual account of his derring-do on behalf of the CIA in Egypt and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Today, Copeland says he was but is no longer a management specialist for the agency, sometimes working on the CIA payroll and sometimes working under contract for a prominent management firm.