

NAT HENTOFF

William S. Paley Gets off the CIA Hook

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The managements of the New York Times, CBS News, and some of the other redoubts of the Fourth Estate have been importuning the CIA and the President to disclose the names of those wretched turncoats who, through the years, have pretended to be aboveboard journalists while tricking on the side for the CIA. Even as of this February, according to the Church Committee report, at least 50 employees of domestic news organizations are still reporting to two masters, one in the shadows. A number of nonmanagement figures, including Walter Cronkite, are also taking up the chase. Until the press is publicly scoured of this blight, they say, we are all suspect.

Yet, a basic part of the story is missing. And Dan Schorr, as usual—even though he's been taken off the air by employers buying their devotion to journalistic independence—has been focusing on that strangely missing element. Speaking at a Newspaper Guild conference in Washington, Schorr pointed out that keeping the heat on CIA-affiliated news employees marvelously serves the interests of management. Why is there no investigative reporting, he asked, concerning "the high executives, still unknown," who greased the machinery for the CIA to function inside television and newspaper operations? "Why," as Schorr said later, "is everybody after the shnooks and not the bosses?"

The same question was asked recently, off the record, by a source who was long and intimately involved with recruiting and placing spies who type with two fingers. "Within my experience," he says, "in every case in which we had a special arrangement with a reporter, management knew about it."

A case in point: In the early 1950s, the relatively new president of CBS News, Sig Mickelson, had just returned from his first tour of the network's European bases. Summoned to the office of the emperor of CBS, William S. Paley, Mickelson was introduced by Paley to two CIA executives. They were annoyed with the president of CBS News because Mickelson had not made a point of meeting with a

CBS stringer in Stockholm. "He's with us," one of the CIA men chided Mickelson, "and it would have been useful in maintaining his cover if he had been seen meeting with the president of CBS News."

Mickelson, pleading that he was a new boy on the job, said he hadn't known about the special status of the Stockholm stringer. "Well," the CIA man instructed him, "remember that he doesn't work for you. He works for us. But he's got to appear to work for you, understand? So give him real assignments, and we'll be greatly appreciative."

Throughout this exchange, William S. Paley had remained in the office. "He didn't say anything," someone who was present has reported, "but he had the air of presiding over it all."

This intriguing incident remained cozily secret until February of this year. CBS's "60 Minutes" had gotten a lead on the story, as part of a piece on broadcast journalists who had been on the CIA payroll. Discovering that the New York Times was also on the case and about to print it, "60 Minutes" handed the story to Dan Schorr who didn't have to wait until Sunday. It was February 10. Schorr, and only Schorr, knew of another story about to explode, and in view of its nature, he was surely not looking for trouble with William S. Paley. Still, you get a lead, you have to follow it all the way. Schorr called Paley and asked about the meeting which Sig Mickelson had already described to Schorr. No such meeting had ever taken place, said Paley.

Schorr went on the air with what he had, including Paley's name. There was rampant anxiety, among some CBS News personnel, but what the hell, the Times was about to break the same story. CBS had no choice but to go ahead. And when the Times did come out, the story was all there—except for one thing. No mention of Paley. "Why?" a number of Times officials were asked. "We just missed it." How-odd to miss an elephant in a bodega. Anyway, later, William Safire had no difficulty finding and

Continued on next page

Nat Hentoff

Continued from preceding page

redlining the Paley name in his column. But on the *news* side, the Times has let the story die.

Soon after, George Bush, the new office manager of the CIA, came to New York for a morning meeting with Punch Sulzberger and other Times's suzerains, to be followed by lunch at CBS with William Paley and his viceroys. Dan Schorr, although his beat was the CIA, received no invitation. A cautionary tale perhaps for those who would engage in investigative reporting of the boss.

In any case, that's not the only CIA link to be looked into at CBS. Back in the late 1950s, another journalist was told by his CIA contact to get a job, any job, at CBS. "Once you're there," the journalist was told, "we'll see that you're assigned to Moscow, which is where we want you to be." The newsman picked up a gig on the CBS overnight desk in New York, a position of prestige somewhat akin to busboy in another line of work. Yet, by God, merit triumphs, and he is soon sent to Moscow. A reporter, who was at CBS when the miracle happened but has since

left, told me, "No one in management then, and no one now, will even reveal who made that assignment. But you guess."

Then there was the journalist—and this was reported in the January 31, 1976 New York Times—who was approached by a CIA talent scout in 1952. The reporter was already on the Times staff while also attending the Russian Institute at Columbia University. How would he like patriotically to maximize his skills? And it would be okay with the boss, the CIA man said, because the agency had an arrangement with the late Arthur Hays Sulzberger that permitted Times's overseas correspondents to simultaneously service the CIA. That story was run, but there has been no investigative follow-up by any of the Times's resourceful news diggers.

I have focused on CBS and the Times because I'm satisfied those stories are hard. But there are as yet undeveloped CIA leads at other news organizations with no discernible enthusiasm from management to get reporters to pursue those leads. Meanwhile, however, the righteous clamor goes on for the CIA to let go its list of reporters' names. "Think about it though," says Dan Schorr. "They don't have to go to the CIA which is not going to reveal the names—any more than I'm going to reveal the names of my sources. For every one of those organizations calling out for disclosure, there is someone in management—or formerly in management—who already has the names. Including, of course, their own names, because *they're* the ones who provided the cover. If there is going to be exposure, let it be complete—the bosses as well as the working stiffs."

Meanwhile, what a hole there is each night at CBS News. There is no more truly independent investigator in all of broadcast journalism than Dan Schorr, and CBS has beached him. □