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# CIA and the Press: No 'Natural Affinity'

Two events of importance to the news business and its customers occurred during Washington's holiday doldrums. Both concerned a troublesome subject: the relationship between the Central Intelligence Agency and the press.

On Christmas morning and the two following mornings, The New York Times published the best and most exhaustive exploration of that relationship that has appeared in the daily press so far. And the day after Christmas, a House subcommittee on intelligence began hearings on the same subject.

The Times series provided more detail than daily newspaper readers had ever been given on how the CIA used the press over the years in its collection of information abroad and its attempts to shape world events by the manipulation of information and opinion.

It included yet another set of figures on the numbers of journalists and media organizations that were co-opted by the intelligence agency. It named names—although not all the names—and it dealt matter-of-factly, if briefly and unobtrusively, with allegations about the involvement with the CIA of The Times itself and some of its staff members.

Much of the material had been published before, and the figures were not startlingly different from those that have appeared in congressional reports and elsewhere. Nevertheless, there was

enough that was new to keep one reading, and it was all pulled together coherently.

The Times series did something more important, though, than merely document that the CIA used the media. It made it clear that there can be no real community of interest between an intelligence agency and the press.

The CIA's stock in trade includes deception and covert manipulation. It does the nation's undercover dirty work. The press, on the other hand, has only one justification for its special sta-

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tus in this country: its ability to inform the public, fully and without bias or restraint. The twain can never meet.

That brings us to the House hearings. Even more strikingly than the Times series, the opening days of the hearings verified this irreconcilable divergence of purpose.

In their testimony, former CIA officials argued the contrary. Reporters and spies have a lot in common, they said—a "natural affinity," one called it.

Ray S. Cline, who has been a high official of the CIA and the State Department's intelligence bureau, said that journalists working abroad and CIA agents "all are searching for nuggets of

truth about the outside world. They all try to acquire reliable sources, whose identities they often feel it necessary to protect, and in every case their credibility depends on a record for objectivity and accuracy."

In fact, he said, the American news media are "the only unfettered espionage agencies in this country."

Therefore, Cline reasoned, why shouldn't American journalists moonlight for the CIA, accepting expense money or even actual pay if their employers approve? Such moonlighters, he declared, "do not damage the U.S. press in any way unless they undertake so much special work for the CIA that it handicaps them in carrying out their normal duties."

Accepting expense money or an "occasional stipend" for getting information for the CIA does not harm the free press, he said, if the moonlighting doesn't interfere with regular duties. And, he added, the reporter who provides voluntary, unpaid assistance to the CIA need not worry. "No harm to the reputation of the U.S. free press will be done if the journalists themselves do not gossip about their contacts with the CIA."

The only thing that prevents a "healthy relationship" between the press and "the parallel profession of newsgatherers in the CIA," he said, is "the extravagant post-Watergate pretension to purity and morality." I suppose that makes good, hard-

headed common sense from an intelligence point of view. It cannot make sense to journalists who feel the weight of their First Amendment responsibilities.

In their testimony, several of the former CIA officials vigorously attacked a straw man—the idea that journalists should have absolutely no contact with the CIA.

I don't think that is a common position among those who are concerned about the CIA's use of the press. There is no reason why journalists should not have reporter-source relationships at the CIA, just as they do at other agencies. All reporters engage in a certain amount of give and take with their sources, informal exchanges of information and gossip, and it would be foolish to say that this is prohibited in the case of the CIA.

But when a reporter accepts what amounts to an intelligence assignment, with or without pay, or collects, quite aside from his journalistic chores, information that he delivers to the CIA or when he suggests a potential recruit or carries money or messages or operates a mail drop or does any of the other things that a journalist can do quite easily and that would be extremely useful to the agency, then he has overstepped the bounds. And, contrary to what Cline and like-minded intelligence professionals might say, he has hurt the American press.