

The C.I.A. Cloud Over the Press

By Daniel Schorr

ASPEN, Colo.—One of William E. Colby's less exhilarating moments as Director of Central Intelligence was having to call a news conference to demand deletion from the Senate report on assassination plots of a dozen names, including such underworld figures as Sam Giancana and John Rosselli.

However misguided the recruitment of these worthies in the C.I.A.'s designs on Fidel Castro, they had been promised eternal secrecy about their roles, and, for the agency, delivering on that promise was an article of faith as well as law.

Again, when Mr. Colby was subpoenaed by the House Intelligence Committee for the names of certain intelligence officers, he faced up to a threatened contempt citation by making it clear that he would rather go to jail than compromise intelligence sources.

This goes, as well, for the names of journalists who have served the C.I.A. And Mr. Colby's successor, George Bush, has said there will be absolutely no change in that policy because he is "dedicated to the protection of sources." The principle is that an intelligence agency that rats on its agents, past or present, won't have very many in the future.

This poses a problem to the journalistic community, which, out of concern for the compromising of the First Amendment, would like the intelligence community to expose the infiltrators.

But banging on a closed door seems a fruitless diversion, and there may be a more fruitful way of going about this. There has clearly been a pattern of cooperation between the C.I.A. and employers of journalists. Managers, with less legal restraint, should be able to provide some of the information about their employees' roles and their own.

"Where an American news organization provided cover for a C.I.A. officer," says an intelligence veteran, "the practice was to make arrangement with management."

Such an arrangement was necessary, if only to cover transfers, absences and other hard-to-explain movements. There is reason to believe that some of these arrangements may have originally been formalized in memorandums of understanding between C.I.A. directors and the employers concerned.

There have been published suggestions of management involvement with the C.I.A. For example:

Wayne Phillips, former staff member



Tom Hachtman

of The New York Times, has stated, with the support of documentary material, that the C.I.A. tried to recruit him in 1952 while he was studying at Columbia University's Russian Institute. He said an agency official told him that the C.I.A. had "a working arrangement" with Arthur Hays Sulzberger, then publisher of The Times, and that the agency could arrange to get him assigned to Moscow.

(Arthur Ochs Sulzberger, the present publisher, has said: "I never heard of The Times being approached either in my capacity as publisher or as the son of the late Mr. Sulzberger.")

Sig Mickelson, former president of CBS News, has said that in 1954 he was called to the office of William S. Paley, CBS board chairman, in whose presence two C.I.A. officials told him that Austin Goodrich, a CBS News stringer in Stockholm, was a C.I.A. agent. (Mr. Paley has denied that there was any such meeting.)

There are also unconfirmed reports, pursued by investigative reporters, of arrangements by newspapers in Florida and California to provide cover to C.I.A. officers.

Most of this goes back to the 1950's, when the C.I.A. deputy director Frank Wisner cultivated news media executives and was reputed to have boasted of playing the press like a "mighty Wurlitzer." No such formal arrange-

ment is believed to exist today. The C.I.A. says it has stopped using "accredited" correspondents of American news media, and more recently has stated that it will also phase out the use of part-time correspondents of American news organizations.

Current news executives profess to be mystified about the nature of the clandestine lines that C.I.A. ran into their organizations in past years. But there are executives and retired executives, who could help dispel the cloud hanging over the press by coming forward to tell the arrangements they made with the C.I.A.

If restoring the fair name of the free press requires exposure of reporters who served the C.I.A., often after appeals to their patriotism, then the parade could well be led by employers who made the practice possible—presumably out of equally patriotic motives.

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