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Q and A

David Wise On Internal Intelligence

David Wise has been writing about American intelligence activities for more than 15 years. With Thomas Ross he wrote "The Invisible Government," which was highly critical of the CIA, and he has just published a new book, "The American Police State." Wise was interviewed by Washington Star Staff Writer Jeremiah O'Leary.

Question: *The question of abuse of intelligence has ranged over a wide area. Has your research led you to conclusions beyond those that the courts have reached in terms of the roles and the guilt or innocence of various people involved?*

Wise: Well, yes. I reached a very strong judgment about Henry Kissinger. Kissinger has testified that his role was 'passive.' I reached the conclusion that on every crucial point Kissinger attempted to conceal the extent of his own role in the wiretapping from the Congress, the public and the press: There's no evidence that Kissinger thought up the idea of wiretapping the 17 associates, newsmen and other aides, but he certainly took a very active and not a passive role. And I can only conclude that he therefore attempted to mislead the public in his testimony about it.

Q: *For example?*

A: Well, he met with Hoover three times and discussed wiretapping with Hoover three times. The evidence suggests that he went over to the FBI. There's a memo by William Sullivan, a high official in the FBI — there's no reason to doubt it, because why would someone make up a thing like this? — in which Sullivan says that Kissinger went over to the FBI and read the transcripts of these tapes. Kissinger says he can't recall that. Alexander Haig has testified that he went over to the FBI many times to read the raw taps. In addition, on the day the New York Times story of the secret bombing of Cambodia broke, the evidence is very

clear that Hoover and Kissinger conferred by long distance telephone four times in one day. Kissinger hasn't denied that he did provide some names, but he has insisted his role was basically clerical, handing in the names according to agreed criteria. In fact, I show in the book that one of the names was never on the original list that was agreed upon in the first meeting with President Nixon.

Q: *Whose name was that?*

A: At the first meeting at which this program was discussed in the White House, Henry Brandon of the London Sunday Times, a correspondent in Washington, was to be wiretapped. But when the names were sent over by Kissinger, Henry Brandon's name was not on the list. Instead, the name of the assistant to the secretary of defense, who was then Melvin Laird, was on the list, Col. Robert E.

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Pursley. And the implication to me is that Kissinger was the one who substituted Pursley's name. Melvin Laird says that both Kissinger and the president were very angry at Laird because they felt he was the source of the leak to the Times. Laird denies he's the source of the leak, but it's Laird's belief that Kissinger had his assistant, Col. Pursley, tapped because in effect, he was tapping Laird. So you have the secretary of state, in effect, tapping the secretary of defense, and Laird's angry about it.

Q: *Another tap was on Anthony Lake, whose resignation from Kissinger's staff at the NSC came several years before he ever knew he had been tapped, is that correct?*

A: That's correct. It was during the invasion of Cambodia, and a number of Kissinger's young assistants at that time were disillusioned. You can remember that touched off Kent State and the tragedy there. I quote in my book from a letter that Anthony Lake handed in to Kissinger, along with Roger Morris, who resigned at that time. It explained the reasons that they believed that the costs of the invasion of Cambodia were going to be far higher than the gains that could be expected and they wanted to get their resignation on the record before there was any public reaction. But there's an interesting story there. At the time of the Cambodian invasion, Bebe Rebozo, Nixon's great crony, and Nixon were flying on a helicopter to Camp David. They telephoned Kissinger at the White House from the helicopter and after Nixon chatted for awhile with Kissinger he said, 'Wait a minute, Bebe has something to say to you.' And he put Rebozo on the phone, and from the helicopter Rebozo said, 'The president wants you to know if this doesn't work, Henry, it's your ass.'

Q: *How are these items to be put in perspective?*

A: There's a phrase in the Declaration of Independence about a long train of abuses. This book is about a long train of abuses, not by an English king but by our own intelligence agents. Violations of law in many cases. The Rockefeller Commission found that the CIA, for example, had broken the law, had committed acts they characterized as illegal. As for breaking the law and often violating the Constitution, the CIA, the FBI, IRS, NSA have done break-ins, wiretapping, bugging, mail opening, cable reading, physical surveillance. Often this was done in the name of national security to protect us. But in fact the law was broken in the name of some higher interest, an alleged higher interest of national security. But this did not begin with Richard Nixon. I trace it back to the Roosevelt era, for example. There were many instances where presidents used these agencies for straight political purposes. And one of the stories that I tell is how Lyndon Johnson sent a special squad of FBI men to Atlantic City in 1964 to bug the Democratic National Convention. They moved into the Hotel Claridge, they moved in one floor below Dr. Martin Luther King's room.

Q: The 1964 convention was not exactly a tense political affair. Why did Johnson need to bug it — or King?

A: One of Johnson's main concerns, from his point of view, was the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party and its fight for credentials to be seated as a delegation. So, by tapping the black leaders, Johnson knew what was going on in great detail in connection with the most important aspect of that convention, politically. And he also knew what Robert Kennedy was doing because Robert Kennedy was there at that convention, he was in touch with Dr. King. So by tapping King, Johnson in effect had the nerve center of the convention bugged and he had complete political control of that convention. He was also concerned that Bobby Kennedy might stampede the delegates — a very unlikely possibility — which would in some way deprive Johnson of the nomination. So, here's an example of not national security use of an agency, but what I conclude is straight political use. Walter Lippmann wrote later that Johnson seemed to be a masterful politician and had total control. But the question, said Lippmann, was how has he gained this total control? It almost seems that old Walter Lippmann had smelled a rat.

Q: And it was during this period that certain tape recordings were made of alleged sexual misconduct by King and then were reportedly offered to some reporters?

A: They were offered. A number of newspapermen were offered transcripts of the buggings of Martin Luther King's hotel rooms. The purpose was to discredit King as a moral leader and perhaps to break up his marriage. They sent a tape, a composite tape, to his wife. William Sullivan of the FBI told me that the tape was a composite and he was ordered by Hoover to have the tape delivered to the Kings with the purpose to break up King's marriage. And in fact, the tape was sent. I name two reporters who were offered these transcripts by the FBI, according to them, according to the reporters, and they were both outraged and neither of them used it.

Q: Who were they?

A: One is not known in Washington, it's Ben Bradlee, the editor of the Washington Post. He told me the offer was made by Cartha DeLoach, former assistant director of the FBI, and DeLoach I also quote as denying this ever happened. Bradlee at that time was head of the Newsweek bureau in Washington. He and Jay Iselin were doing a cover piece on Hoover for Newsweek and they went to see Hoover. Afterwards, according to Bradlee, DeLoach offered him a transcript taken from a bugging of Dr. Martin Luther King's hotel room. Bradlee later warned the attorney general, who was then Nicholas DeB. Katzenbach, who flew to the LBJ Ranch to warn the president of the FBI activity.

Q: Without much luck?

A: Katzenbach told me he got the impression that Johnson would stop it. Well, Johnson didn't stop it. The evidence suggests he sent a note over to the FBI saying, don't trust Bradlee, in effect, that Bradlee was talking about this and shouldn't be trusted. So the evidence suggests that Johnson took no effort to stop either the bugging of Dr. King or the attempt to disseminate this material to destroy King. The other reporter was David Kras-

low, who is the bureau chief for the Cox newspapers and who has not named the FBI official who offered him this material. It's interesting, I found that as I moved around Washington trying to pin down these rumors that everyone had heard that someone else was offered the transcript. I was never offered the transcript. I was a newspaperman in Washington at that time. I was chief of the Washington bureau of the New York Herald-Tribune.

Q: Have you ever had any personal thoughts on what you would have done?

A: The purpose of the offer was to get a story printed to destroy King. I certainly would not have written that story. The question of whether or not one would expose the FBI is a very difficult one because in that context of 12 years ago the press was used to living with these agencies and feeding off them and relating to them and using them as sources, and it would have been like pushing a self-destruct button for a reporter to have done it. I think Bradlee was very courageous to do what he did, to warn the attorney general of what was going on.

Q: He did not write about the offer?

A: He did not. There's an additional complication here because to write about the offer would be accomplishing the FBI's purpose in the sense that you would have to describe, to some extent, the nature of the material being offered. That's exactly what the FBI wanted. So it was a heads-you-win, tails-I lose. Even to expose it would have peddled the filth that was being peddled, so that they would have at least hurt King in the process of being hurt themselves. But on the more general question of the role of the press, the press can't be in bad with government intelligence agencies and expect to do their job. It's a very difficult line to be walked by the press, to cultivate sources, to go to restaurants with people, to drink with them, to talk with them, and yet to be able to write the truth as they see it. Very difficult. I don't fault any of those people for not having written the story.



David Wise: "... a long train of abuses. . ."