

FBI Sensitive to Criticism on Wiretaps

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

The inside story of J. Edgar Hoover's recent spy arrests shows that they began shortly after Attorney General Nicholas deB. Katzenbach, now suddenly transferred, insisted that the Supreme Court be informed of wholesale wiretapping and eavesdropping that the FBI had undertaken without the direct authorization of the Attorney General.

One spy case that broke on July 12 was seven years old, and the FBI had thoroughly interrogated the suspect, retired Lt. Col. William Whalen, for several weeks beginning in September, 1963.

Late this summer, however, Hoover's top agent in Nevada, Dean Elson, and the FBI faced criminal prosecution in Nevada for violation of the state's wiretapping laws.

All this made unfavorable headlines for the 72-year-old FBI director who has enjoyed favorable headlines during most of his long career and who is even more sensitive about the press than his friend in the White House who has kept him on duty beyond the statutory retirement age of 70.

Whatever the motives, the FBI on Sept. 2 broke another sensational spy case by putting the finger on Valentin A. Revin, Russian science attache, for buying information from

John Humink, a Maryland scientist, who had trapped him and other members of the Soviet Embassy.

Wooing a Russian

The fact is that Hoover had also wanted to break this spy case last July at the time he was getting unfavorable headlines from the Justice Department's admission of wholesale FBI eavesdropping.

However, John Humink objected. It had required several years for him to win the confidence of the Russians. He had begun seeing them at social and business gatherings as early as 1961, had taken them out for lunch or dinner and they had reciprocated.

So FBI agents agreed that Humink should try to persuade Revin to defect and if possible become an agent for the United States.

Humink submitted handwritten reports to the FBI and kept no copies. (This was a necessary precaution in case the Russians, ever suspicious, should search his house for evidence that he might be a double agent.) However, this column has seen copies of Humink's reports.

"To get him (Revin) to cooperate," Humink proposed, "we must show him physical evidence which will convince him that embarrassment to him will be so great that his inability or unwillingness to cooperate will totally ruin his image and will embarrass his government . . .

"This evidence must be newspaper proofs showing his espionage activities with pictures and captions which are embarrassing to him. He must be called a blundering spy, playing into the hands of the Americans. The evidence must appear as if ready for immediate press release and, in fact, we must be ready with something for the press in case he does not go."

Careful Precautions

To help the FBI in planning the defection attempt, Humink submitted a handwritten rundown on Revin. It read:

"1. He likes cool climate. 2. He has simple personal requirements. 3. He likes music. 4. He does not trust an auto. 5. He intends to return to Moscow. 6. He is capable and proud. 7. His training is complete. 8. He distrusts all people but Russians. Remember he fled from the German onslaught during WW II—he stayed in Siberia at that time as a child of approx. 10 years old—a very formative age (and has had intensive training). 9. He is sure his country is great and its system best. In spite of what he sees here. 10. He well knows what price he will pay if he is caught working for the U.S.A."

Humink also cautioned: "We must not be lazy about the preparations so that all of this effort to date will have been worthwhile.

"If we have to keep him on

the hook for another few months to finish preparations, then it must be done. The reward will be great if he will cooperate."

Humink, pretending to be nervous over the arrest of Lt. Col. Whalen, also persuaded the Russians to prepare forged papers for him in case he needed to flee the country. He even made a trip to the Dominican Republic in July to pose for photographs for a forged Dominican passport. The FBI was anxious to examine the forgeries to see how expertly the Russians operated.

But before the forged papers could be delivered and before the plan could be carried out to recruit Revin, Hoover decided to break the case. The State Department wanted minimum publicity, it is understood, hoping the Russians would not retaliate against one of our diplomats in Moscow. As it turned out, the Russians ousted Donald R. Lesh in a prompt tit-for-tat response.

Humink complained about the premature wind-up of the case in a letter, dated Sept 11, to the FBI's Soviet section, parts of which we have already published.

It should be noted that the FBI agents who worked on the spy cases were reassuringly efficient. The publicity decisions made on top were less reassuring.

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