

The Journalist Out In

By Philip J. Hiltz

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We do disagreeable things so that ordinary people here and elsewhere can sleep safely in their beds at night. Is that too romantic? Of course, occasionally we do very wicked things. . . .

—From "The Spy Who Came In From the Cold"

Sam Jaffe Struggles to Escape From a Tangled Web of Intrigue

IF ERIC AMBLER WERE writing the story it would go just this way—an innocent character, say a reporter, would carry his enthusiasm for a good story too far. He would blunder, and finally fall into a hopeless web, a tangled skein of intrigue full of predatory spiders and wriggling flies.

The FBI, which thought for years of Sam Jaffe as a friendly informant, later labeled him a former Russian spy and even a possible "sleeper agent" who may someday awake to spy again. Those on the other side, a number of journalists, opponents of the FBI, generally disbelieve the Russian spy part of the story but have shunned him simply as a former collaborator with the FBI and CIA, something they say no journalist should be, ever. And there are few friends or employers in between who are not made very nervous by the whole state of affairs.

"Sam Jaffe," as columnist Taylor Branch put it, "is the most complete pariah in the history of American journalism. To him, being an ordinary pariah looks like a Pulitzer prize."

The story of Sam Jaffe's career as a broadcast journalist is a sad tale of that gray, hazardous border between the two information-gathering professions—spying and reporting. It involves a secret list of Russian agents, a dead American spy in Moscow, a Soviet defector named Nosenko who apparently said Jaffe was an agent of the KGB. There was a Russian girlfriend, and an auto crash at 3 a.m. in Moscow. There was a time when each of three intelligence agencies probably believed Sam Jaffe was their man; then a time when all three felt they were double-crossed. And, at several turns in the story, there were warnings for Sam Jaffe of what was to come . . .

Now Jaffe, once a top-rung correspondent for ABC, and bureau chief in Moscow and Hong Kong, has not had a regular full-time job in nine years. Now Sam Jaffe is in court with the FBI, fighting a freedom-of-information case to discover what it is that made the FBI turn against him and that eventually caused his career to collapse around him.

"The last nine years have been incredible," Jaffe says. "If it weren't for a few friends, I would be broken. All this time the FBI has been whispering in



the Cold

people's ears. They have been reporting what lectures I go to, what I say at parties, who I have lunch with. . . .

"I am a good American. I pay my taxes. I say I am not a Russian spy. The FBI says, 'Yeah you are.' Well, I want them to prove it. I want it all out in the open. I want my family cleared. If I should drop dead, I don't want them living with this stigma. . . . The CIA has cleared me. Now I want the FBI to do the same."

Since 1975, the CIA has said that it made a careful investigation, and the investigation proved that Sam Jaffe was nobody's agent. But the FBI has refused to exonerate Jaffe. In fact, the FBI has been so resistant to releasing Jaffe's files that the ACLU believes a new record has been set for freedom-of-information cases—six times, Jaffe's lawyer has said the information released by the FBI is not enough, and six times the court has agreed and demanded that the FBI turn over more documents.

The FBI refuses to discuss the Jaffe case, saying it is a matter pending in court and it would be inappropriate to comment.

Then, three weeks ago, the FBI released an affidavit in court that described a 1969 document in its files which reports, ". . . the New York FBI office agreed with the Washington field office that the plaintiff [Jaffe] was an agent of a foreign intelligence agency, and even though the plaintiff may not have considered himself as such, there was no doubt that the foreign intelligence agency regarded him as their agent. . . . It was not possible to conclude whether or not plaintiff was continuing to serve the interests of this foreign intelligence agency. . . . The possibility he could be used by some other foreign officials should always be borne in mind. . . ."

The Jaffes live on Bradley Boulevard in Bethesda, in a large house that is a remnant of Jaffe's former high status and handsome salary. In the study, file drawers are full of documents from the CIA, FBI and the State Department. The papers are stamped SECRET, and are half blotted out with the censor's black ink. The heaps of paper represent Sam Jaffe's life as told by strangers: spy to spy, agent to control, informer to agent.

The sudden slide of his successful television career, Jaffe says, was caused by what is in those papers. First his superiors at ABC cooled when they learned of it, he says, and brought him home from the Hong Kong bureau to handle freshman assign-

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JAFFE, From H2

a happy father; he giggled and played with her, he spoiled her. But Leah has not seen that. She has seen nothing but depressing conversation, and shouting. There is no planning for holidays. No money. For Leah it has been years of nothing but down."

There is some irony in the situation, since Sam Jaffe's uncle—the famous actor who was Dr. Zorba in TV's Ben Casey, and who starred in numerous movies including "Gunga Din," "Lost Horizons," "Exodus" and many others—was blacklisted in the McCarthy era. He had no work for six years because he and his friend, Zero Mostel, had refused to cooperate with the government. Sam Jaffe, reporter, now says his career is in shambles for the opposite reason—that he failed to refuse when the government asked for help.

It was one of his first jobs after he served in the Korean war as a Marine combat correspondent. He was a radio news writer at the United Nations, and as a matter of course he came into contact with a number of Russian correspondents.

One afternoon, Jaffe got a call from the FBI; they wanted to meet with him. Jaffe went, and he met two stern-looking men named Willis and Gamber. "We know you're seeing a lot of Russians," Jaffe was told. "We would like you to report to us about your meetings and conversations with them."

Jaffe did not assent out of patriotism, and he took no pay. But he was young, and the year was 1952. He already had witnessed the disintegration of the career of his uncle, who had been out of work for three years at that time.

There is no question that cooperating with the government was common among newsmen at the time. Correspondents routinely, upon returning from a foreign assignment, would go in to be debriefed by intelligence officers.

A congressional committee a few years ago found that the CIA alone had maintained undercover contacts with at least 50 American journalists, and even paid off half of them for their work. Jaffe is the only one whose story has reached the public so completely.

So Sam Jaffe became—to the FBI officially, though Jaffe would not have applied the term to himself—an informant. Jaffe says that the information he passed along was rather silly, being opinions and mere political gossip, and the FBI documents released so far seem to bear this out:

The FBI asked him more than once to please read an article in the Nation magazine. The article had been critical of the FBI and the agency wanted Jaffe to pass along some information about its author. Another time, Jaffe's Russian friends asked him to write a travel guide for young Russians just coming to this country. The FBI urged him to accept the job, in hopes that it would lead to more serious double-agent work. Jaffe refused to do it.

Jaffe's chats with the FBI went on through 1955. Also during that time, when Jaffe got the first interview in years with Chou En-lai, he turned over his notes on that scoop to the U.S. Embassy in Indonesia, where the interview took place.

His first nudge from the CIA came in 1955. Just after he applied for a job at CBS, a CIA agent approached him and said the agency knew of his application to CBS. Furthermore, the agent said, employment could be arranged if Jaffe were willing to do some work for them during his tenure. A quick assignment to Moscow could be arranged, and Jaffe would in turn report occasionally to the CIA as well as to the TV audience.

In the years since that contact, CBS first denied that anyone at the network had been cooperating with the CIA. Then in 1977, the president of CBS News, Richard Salant, disclosed that CBS had been working closely with the CIA during the 1950s and the 1960s.

Jaffe did not go along with the CIA arrangement, he says, but CBS did hire him. Jaffe did not get any assignment to Moscow, at least not until four years later.

The next tale of intrigue that Jaffe tells, and the FBI papers repeat, came in 1960. Francis Gary Powers was about to be tried in Moscow for his spy flight over the Soviet Union. Jaffe was assigned to go to Moscow as chief correspondent Marvin Kalb's assistant—to carry bags and do the odd research or reporting work.

Jaffe's bags were packed and he was ready to leave when the telephone rang. It was the New York station chief of the CIA. He wanted to meet right away for a drink, and insisted it was important. At the bar, Jaffe met the CIA man and a portly man who was identified as a psychologist. He quickly started giving Jaffe a course in the psychology of brainwashing. "We want you to find out whether Powers has been brainwashed," the psychologist said.

Jaffe didn't think he would be going to the trial, as the seating would be very limited, and he protested that he knew nothing about psychology. He was told simply to watch Powers carefully—for gestures, voice, the whole demeanor—and to study some of the papers he would be given on the subject. Jaffe agreed perfunctorily, and left the meeting with a batch of papers on spy trials and brainwashing.

When Jaffe boarded the plane to Moscow, he received his first surprise gift from The Company. While all the other reporters had seats elsewhere, Sam Jaffe's ticket had him sitting next to the wife of Gary Powers. A free scoop. Then when the plane landed, he was again surprised. While the other reporters had been given lodgings in a second-rate hostel near the airport, he found himself being driven to the VIP hotel. When he located his room, he found it was four doors away from Barbara Powers' room. A friendship

between Jaffe and Powers quickly developed, and to the fury of the other reporters, she refused to talk with anyone but Jaffe.

Then Jaffe found he not only had been given tickets to the trial but found his seat was right up front near the witness box where Gary Powers stood. He was sitting among Soviet generals and other VIPs, while the rest of the press was in some distant balcony. This treatment convinced the Soviets for a time that Jaffe was a CIA agent, not a reporter.

Jaffe was next hired by ABC, in 1961, and he asked to be assigned to the Far East. But James Hagerty, head of ABC news at the time, insisted that Jaffe be posted to Moscow. So Jaffe was sent off to Russia, with parties and songs from the network, to open ABC's first Moscow bureau.

Retelling the story seems painful for Jaffe, who interrupts himself often. "I'm sick of it. Those bastards. . . ." Jeune fills in with details that Sam has forgotten, and brings out the relevant papers. Jaffe is at the bar pouring a drink. "Hey," Jeune says, "how much is that? It looks like you're pouring a triple."

In Moscow Sam Jaffe was an energetic worker and has been described as "the kind of reporter who was always buttonholing Russians while other American correspondents hung out at the embassy acting like diplomats." His work earned him the world scoop on the ouster of Nikita Khrushchev, the first story on the Russian manned space flight, and other items along the way.

But on the cold night of Oct. 30, 1962, Samuel Adason Jaffe ran off the road into a Moscow ditch. A couple months before, he had met a young Russian girl and had been going out with her fairly regularly. That night he had taken her to a party put on by the Time and Life magazine group.

agement" but do so gradually, and report all further conversations with Slava.

Jaffe and Slava saw each other a number of times after that, becoming rather friendly as they visited at Jaffe's apartment or out at Slava's country dacha. Unlike many news sources, Slava admitted to Jaffe that he worked for the KGB. He also said that the KGB believed for a time that Jaffe was an agent of the CIA, since he had gotten such unusual treatment at the trial of Gary Powers.

The relationship continued over several years, and Jaffe cultivated Slava as a source. Slava, no doubt, also was cultivating Jaffe. He asked Jaffe about his opinions of politics and events in America—which Jaffe spoke freely about. He also asked about what went on at the press briefings in the U.S. Embassy—which Jaffe says he refused to talk about even though they were innocuous meetings.

It was a conventional reporter-and-government-source relationship, except that the players were simultaneously wired up to opposing intelligence agencies. Apparently, Slava had reported to the KGB that Sam Jaffe was one of his informants.

As one former CIA agent put it: "It would be the same with a CIA officer who got to know an ambitious, cagey Tass correspondent. He would put him down on his list of contacts. . . . You have to remember that the Soviets are dealing with a bureaucracy there that is worse than anything we have got. These guys have to be hustling, and reporting this contact and that contact, otherwise they'll soon be out in Sverdlovsk ringing a cash register in some tractor factory."

Then occurred the apparent trigger of Jaffe's later trouble, a conjunction of events that Jaffe himself did not realize at the time, nor did he fully grasp it until at least six years later. Late in 1963, an American agent in the KGB managed to pass out to the American Embassy a large batch of documents. They were photographed. But then a U.S. diplomat decided to return the batch of papers to the Kremlin to demonstrate that he could not be fooled by phony spy documents. The Soviets, after studying the returned papers, found the American agent who had stolen them and shot him.

At about the same time the photographed documents were making their way back to Washington, the Geneva Disarmament Conference was meeting in Geneva. One of the delegates was the husky, 36-year-old diplomat Yuri Ivanovich Nosenko. One afternoon he was noticed missing from the Soviet compound at the Hotel Rex; six days later it was announced that he was in Washington, D.C., a defector who had been granted asylum.

The government was most anxious to question him about his years with the committee for state security and the tourist department in the Soviet Union because these departments had been the ones in contact with Lee Har-

vey Oswald while he was in Russia. It had been less than four months since Kennedy was murdered, and there was as yet no way to be certain whether Oswald had been a KGB agent.

But among the other things Yuri Nosenko did during the long sessions of interrogation with the CIA was to authenticate the photographed KGB documents for which an agent had paid his life. Among those papers was a list of Americans who had allegedly collaborated with the KGB. And apparently one of the names on that list was Samuel Adason Jaffe, correspondent.

Slava, in his last visit with Jaffe, told him about the Nosenko defection. He said that it could affect both of them, because Nosenko "knew a lot." Jaffe did not understand what he meant by "affect both of them"; he assumed that Slava was in trouble and it was Slava's own career that he was talking about.

But it was from the time of the Nosenko interrogation that Jaffe's troubles began. He had been trying for some time to get a visa to visit North Vietnam, as had many other journalists. But what Jaffe did not know until years later was that he got an invitation from North Vietnam to visit.

In the FBI documents released in Jaffe's case there is one that mentions a visa granted to Jaffe by North Vietnam. Apparently the invitation to North Vietnam arrived in Moscow when Jaffe was visiting America briefly, and was intercepted by a journalist there who passed the message on to intelligence officers but not to Jaffe. A possible Jaffe scoop was lost.

There are also, beginning in 1965, the first negative references to Jaffe in the intelligence papers released in court.

A 1965 CIA document rescinds Jaffe's "ad hoc clearance," another document of the time states that Jaffe is henceforward "disapproved . . . and should not be used in any capacity."

In 1966, Jaffe was ejected from Moscow by the Soviets, and ABC moved him to Hong Kong to take over as bureau chief. But the odd events followed him there. He found himself sometimes being followed, and from a British intelligence agent he heard a warning: The intelligence community was upset with him, and he might soon come in for bad treatment.

Jaffe asked why; did they think he was an agent? He friend replied: "They don't know what you are; for all they know you could be a quadruple agent. . . ."

Jaffe was recalled from Hong Kong by ABC in 1969. He still had not connected the car crash, Slava and Nosenko.

Until he came back to Washington, he was unaware of the building, hostile intelligence files on his career. But he soon learned the feelings of the FBI when he visited them for a debriefing—a common courtesy of correspondents to the agency in those days.

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It was 3 a.m. when he was driving home. Jaffe admits he was drunk and says a Russian road crew had not marked a ditch they had been excavating in the roadway. Both front tires exploded as they hit the bottom of the ditch. His girlfriend, Galya, went for help.

A little while later a car pulled up near Jaffe's; help had arrived to pull him out of the ditch and mend the tires; but Galya had not come back.

It was several hours later that Galya appeared at Jaffe's apartment. She was weeping, and Jaffe says he noticed new bruises on her. She said she had been arrested, interrogated, beaten and finally dismissed as a whore who consorted with westerners.

Jaffe became worried about her safety and called a Soviet journalist who was an acquaintance. The journalist said he had found out that Galya was a prostitute, and that a story denouncing her activities would soon be published in the Moscow press. After that, her future would be in doubt. The Russian journalist then introduced Jaffe to an "editor" who might have some influence.

Two days after the accident, Jaffe had lunch with the "editor" who had been introduced to him by a longer title, but wished to be known as "Slava." Slava said he had been successful in killing the story about Galya. Then he began asking Jaffe about American reactions to the Cuban Missile Crisis, which had just ended a few days before. Slava explained that he had some power and could do some services for Jaffe, but would expect things in return.

Jaffe, according to the FBI papers, then went immediately to the U.S. Embassy to report the attempt by Slava to recruit him. He was advised that he should "not attempt an abrupt disen-



By Robert Goldstein, courtesy of Sam Jaffe

Sam Jaffe: "If the FBI thinks I'm a spy . . . why don't they prove it?"

JAFFE, From H4

tor of the CIA, William Colby, stating that an investigation had shown he was not an agent.

Another of the former CIA hands who gave him some help was Victor Marchetti, co-author of "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," a bestselling book despite the blank pages ordered by the CIA and the court.

Marchetti, when he was still in the CIA and did not know Jaffe, had seen some of the cable traffic on Jaffe and even at the time had the feeling that someone who was not guilty of anything was being maligned.

"Throughout the whole affair," Marchetti says, "I feel that Sam was a tough, aggressive, hard-nosed, ruthless journalist. He went after a story any which way he could. He played games with everybody. And some of the dumber people began to think he was their agent. . . . The FBI thought he was their agent. The KGB probably thought he was their agent. The CIA thought he was theirs. . . ."

"But eventually the CIA realized that what Sam had done was in the true spirit of free enterprise, getting it any way he could. The Soviets I think were the next to realize that he was not their man. But the FBI never could bring themselves to accept this, to realize they made a mistake."

In the eyes of the intelligence agencies, Sam Jaffe had double-crossed them. "They thought he was doing things for them, and they were making suggestions of things he could do," Marchetti says, "only to find out later he didn't give a damn, that he didn't care at all. He was just using them as a wedge to get the big scoop . . . like at the Gary Powers trial.

"The agency was angry at him for years," Marchetti adds, "But eventually they concluded that they should not persecute him. It was not only for good motives—they realized that if they pursued this line, eventually it would blow up in their faces. One day something might happen and they would

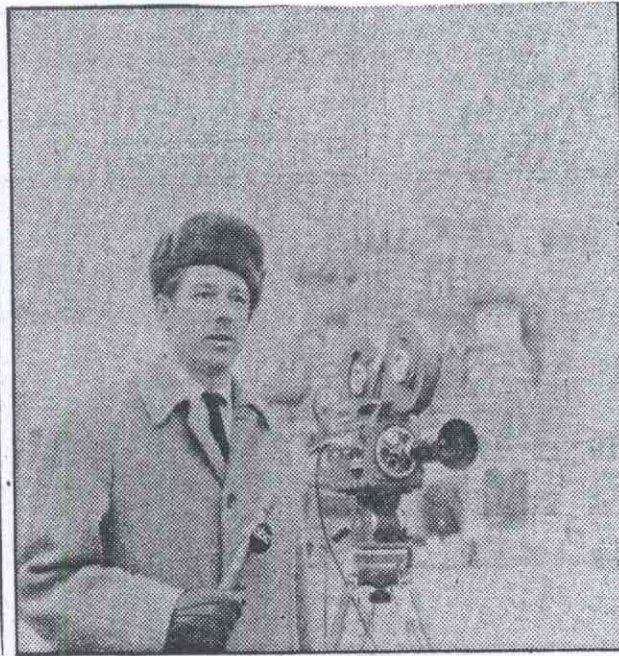
have to reveal all kinds of news sources and that sort of thing. . . ."

When Marchetti eventually got to know Jaffe, he watched events with some unhappiness. "I get the sense now that Sam is in some personal torment. He may be feeling some guilt, feeling maybe he went too far, maybe he overdid it. . . . He's certainly been beaten up over the years for it.

"But I think he really does want it all out on the table now. He wants to clear it all away . . . like a man who has lived a hard, bad life and at the end he goes to confession. He hasn't committed any mortal sins, but there were a whole lot of venial ones. . . ."

Sam Jaffe sits in his kitchen at 1 a.m., talking to another reporter. He is still in court with the FBI, and of the 2,000 pages of documents in their files on him, he has seen only scraps. He still has no full-time work, though for the past few months he has had a one-day-a-week radio show at WRC.

Finishing his scotch, he mentions the years he has sat in just that seat looking out through the trees. "In the summertime, I can't even see the street. What am I supposed to be spying on?" He points to a pair of binoculars on the counter. "Those are my binoculars there. You can write: Jaffe looks at woodpeckers. . . ."



Sam Jaffe today, above, and from left: on location with ABC in Russia; sharing a toast with Nikita Khrushchev; and interviewing then-ambassador Averell Harriman in Red Square, Moscow.

Top photo by Tom Allen—The Washington Post; others courtesy of Sam Jaffe

