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A Mole Within the CIA?

By Philip Noble

THE CIA, for all its warts, appears to be a preserve of patriotism. On occasion, a low-level employee may try to sell information to the Soviets. But the agency has never been scandalized by the treason of a high-level officer.

Yet speculation currently abounds about a Soviet mole within the CIA. A mole is someone who quietly burrows inside an intelligence organization while working for the other side. The mole can be especially dangerous if privy to the agency's top secrets.

Recently, the CIA's former chief of counterintelligence hinted that a former director may have been the real mole. And the counterintelligence chief was himself a suspect in a mole inquiry.

I talked to Victor Marchetti, a former high-ranking CIA officer and now the agency's best-known critic, about this crazy situation. Marchetti, author of "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence," believes in the mole — whoever he is.

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A Russian mole high up in the CIA — is such talk crazy or not?

It's not crazy. In fact, it's rather logical. Russian agents going back to czarist days have always been successful in penetrating rival organizations. Their recruitment of moles in both British and German intelligence is well known.

Almost every U.S. intelligence service — the National Security Council, the military and State Department intelligence and the Joint Chiefs of Staff — have already been compromised by spies who volunteered information to the Russians or were recruited by them. So it is only reasonable to assume that somewhere along the line a ranking CIA officer probably went to work for the other side.

Was there any great fear of a mole during your 14 years with the agency?

There was always concern. Investigations were conducted periodically on officers whose



**EX-CIA OFFICER VICTOR MARCHETTI
'It is only reasonable to assume'**

behavior caught the attention of counterintelligence. For example, in the late '60s, the chief of the Soviet division was actually accused of being a Soviet penetration.

Why?

His performance was not good. He never seemed to recruit any good Soviet agents except through pure luck, that is, when a Russian battered down his door to give us information. And the division appeared to be afraid of detectors.

However, the man was eventually cleared through his career was ruined.

James Angleton, former chief of counterintelligence, has hinted that his old boss, William Colby, may have been a Russian mole. Does this make any sense to you?

No. Angleton was simply grasping at straws to refurbish his own tarnished reputation. Yet as far as I know, he never caught a Soviet spy.

In fact, one current counterintelligence officer tells me that Angleton never handled or even interrogated a Soviet agent.

He was so cautious that the agency had no real offensive program to penetrate the KGB or other foreign agencies.

Just recently, Newsweek revealed that Angleton himself was the target of a CIA investigation. Why was he suspected?

As with the case of the Soviet division chief, Angleton came to be viewed as either incompetent or someone who deliberately goofed up operations. Also, from a Soviet point of view, Angleton would be a key target for manipulation.

But was he actually a mole?

Perhaps an unwitting one. He became so paranoid and confused by the KGB that he was unwittingly causing operational problems just as he would have if he were in Russia's pay. But I do not believe Angleton was a penetration.

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Even if the CIA caught a mole, wouldn't they cover up the case to avoid public disgrace?

First of all, the higher a mole is placed, the tougher it is to identify him and prove the case. He won't have a smoking gun in his hand; there will be no paper trail to trap him.

On the other hand, the agency would probably never expose the mole, once caught, lest it expose itself to great embarrassment.

For example, I've heard of a case of a CIA officer, a chief of station in a northern European country, who was exposed by counterintelligence and then allowed to retire and keep a low profile.

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