

"We don't spy on Americans," CIA Director Richard Helms says.

"Trust us," he begged in his precedent-breaking speech to the American Society of Newspaper Editors.

It's a lie. The CIA does spy on Americans. Including me.

And don't trust it, as Helms beseeched the country's top opinion-makers in his first public appearance on April 14, 1971.

It can't be trusted. It does more than lie and spy. It libels and slanders with impunity. A federal court has held there is no legal recourse when it does.

There is no check on the CIA, no way of controlling it, no way of knowing what it is up to. One of its best friends in Congress, the late, respected Senator Richard Russell, told me before he died that he did not think it leveled with him. Where he believed his words would never be repeated, in a "Top Secret" meeting of which I have a transcript, Russell went further. He said, "You can't believe a word they say."

Russell, leading Southern conservative, had been chief Congressional "watchdog" on the CIA. I put in his hands a copy of what had been done behind his back to alter a record he had made for history. He could not recognize it! With all his experience in public life, he couldn't believe it. He asked for more checking and I did it, bringing him written, official proof.

This is the previously untold prelude to his resigning one of the most ~~prestigious~~ ^{prestigious} posts in Congress and with it all responsibility over the CIA. At the same time he broke a lifelong friendship with Lyndon Johnson.

If insider Russell came to realize he couldn't trust the CIA, can any American trust it?

Especially when it does spy on Americans - including writers - and the top man himself lies about it to the most influential audience he could get.

I have the proof in my possession.

This one kind of spying, of which there is no doubt, is done by the CIA through a front organized for that purpose. In the spy trade, this is referred to as a "buffer", or as "insulation". ~~The~~ It is a "cover" intended to hide the CIA, of which it, ~~actually~~ actually a part. The work is done by a private agency which has other clients, businesses and large corporations.

One of its regional office managers finally got a bellyful. He is a former prize-winning reporter who does not believe government should spy on Americans. So, before quitting, he gathered enough proof and gave it to me. This proof includes identification of the front and its personnel, bills for the service rendered, checks in payment, even envelopes in which the checks were mailed: Plain white dime-store envelopes with only a Washington post office box typed on as a return address.

This reporter will be known to his former employer. He is now working elsewhere. To protect him, I will call him John. That is not his name. On January 24, 1968, John called his boss, whose right name is Paul, and taped the conversation for me. Here are verbatim excerpts:

JOHN: Ah - while we're at it, the CIA's old nemesis, Mr. Harold Weisberg, is coming to [that city] next Friday.

PAUL: Oh, what fun!

JOHN: He's already scheduled on one program that I know of ... they mention here in this blurb a new book that I haven't heard about.

PAUL: Yeah, he's been talking about it here [Washington] ...

JOHN: You think they'll be interested in Weisberg?

PAUL: I'll tell them about it. It's quite likely that they will be, he seems to be bothering them.

JOHN: I read his last book, Oswald in New Orleans. I can see where he would bother them.

PAUL: Yeah - the photographic thing is - has all kinds of stuff in it ...

JOHN: All right, well, so I will keep an eye on Mr. Weisberg here.

PAUL: Okay, and I will let them know ... I think we'll probably want some things anyway.

The subtitle of Oswald in New Orleans is "Case For Conspiracy With the CIA".

"The photographic thing" is Photographic Whitewash, my book exposing the suppression of photographs by the government in the JFK assassination. One of the many things in it that was "bothering them" is facsimile reproduction of a letter by J. Edgar Hoover, until then secret. He wrote the Warren Commission about the motion picture of the President being assassinated taken by Abraham Zapruder.

Hoover called him "Adrian". Here were a couple of key sentences!

The Central Intelligence Agency has inquired if the film copy in possession of this Bureau can be loaned to that Agency solely for training purposes. The showing of the film would be restricted to Agency personnel.

Now the CIA, which has much to do with assassinations outside the United States, does not guard the President. So, in printing a picture of Hoover's secret letter [p.143], I noted that "the CIA said it planned to use a print of the assassination film 'solely for training purposes'. To train assassins? Or to teach them how not to get caught?"

Long before and long after January 24, 1968, all sorts of strange things had been happening to "the CIA's old nemesis" - me. A United States Senator still in public life and therefore not identified told me in 1965 that each time I went to a publishing house with the manuscript of the first book on the Warren Report,

Whitewash, a federal agent was close behind to let official displeasure be known. I was inclined not to credit this until the incredible "Watergate Caper", the Republican bugging of Democratic headquarters right before the July Democratic convention.

In Whitewash I say Lee Harvey Oswald had intelligence connections. That chapter was reprinted in Saga, where it attracted considerable international attention. And Oswald in New Orleans: Case For Conspiracy With the CIA brought to light Oswald's use of the address of another CIA front, one organized for the Bay of Pigs. Reason enough to say of me, "he seems to be bothering them," the CIA? So, they spied on me - "I will keep an eye on Mr. Weisberg."

I was shadowed. My public appearances were taped; my mail, my manuscripts, my luggage, my tape recorder, even my poor ~~innocent~~ typewriter, were intercepted. The typewriter and tape recorder were ruined. So was a four-suiter Val-A-Pak. This happened after I spotted a couple of agents in a Minneapolis audience and blew their cover with excessive kindness.

Don't misunderstand me. I am not against intelligence as such. I do oppose anti-democratic excesses. I acted as a British agent in World War II before joining our own OSS. As it has been a historical necessity for every country, I believe that, given the state of the world today, every country requires a dependable intelligence service. But this should not include domestic spying, spying on private lives and communications or on public appearances.

Almost nothing can have a ^{more} ~~more~~ repressive effect on free speech and press, or on what the people can know. Informing the public is the special function of writers, of investigative reporters in particular, in a representative society. When government inter-

feres in any way with what writers can write and print, it restricts what the electorate can know. Without access to all information on all sides of all public issues, the electorate becomes no more than a rubber stamp for government. Government, regardless of the trappings, becomes, in effect, the American equivalent of a dictatorship.

In February 1968, the month after "John" taped his telephoned conversation with Paul but before I knew about it, I was in New Orleans, at the Fontainebleau Motel. I asked for and got a special ground-floor room on the courtyard. Three months earlier I had been in the adjoining room, an outside one. Detectives had picked up a rumor that there was to be a "hit" on me. While I watched and with my permission, they installed a bug. So, in February, I wanted this special room because I knew the special wiring and where to look for indications of a wired bug.

In November, late at night, I'd caught a man at the door. He was faster and got away. In February, when a source of information phoned me from the lobby and asked that we meet for a snack in the coffee shop, I grabbed the first jacket I could find and left. When I returned, my address book was missing from the pocket of another jacket.