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## BOOK REPORT

### NEW LOOK AT AN OLD BURGLARY

HERE'S a Random House story that *isn't* about Barbara Hutton. Instead, let's look at a book on the upcoming spring list there. Titled *Secret Agenda: Watergate, Deep Throat and the CIA*, it's scheduled for April release.

Says Washington writer Jim Hougan, who's spent the past 4½ years working on the "most important exposé for our time by an investigative journalist" (as Random modestly describes his book in a recent *Publishers Weekly*, it's a "radical revision of the Watergate story." But beyond that Hougan's reluctant to go because, as editor Robert Loomis later verified, Random House is controlling "the release of the information contained in the book."

"We want to hold it close to our vests for a while and decide the best way to publish it," Loomis continued. "We're not going to send out galleys or anything." Awfully interesting, if not a downright red flag! Where are Woodward and Bernstein now that we really need them? Bob Woodward, assistant managing editor in charge of special projects at The Washington Post, doesn't remember being interviewed by Hougan, who, however, says they did talk a couple of times. But Woodward does recall Hougan's *Harper's* magazine cover story about political espionage in January 1980, which was the genesis for the book Random's now so closely guarding.

The piece, according to Hougan began "as a simple article about the life of a private detective here in Washington." He picked one man, seemingly an "ordinary" guy, then found out, as he worked on the piece, that his subject had been at least up to his ankles in political scandal, i.e. Watergate.

In fact, what Hougan says he discovered was that the Watergate break-in "had not been thoroughly investigated." Huh? Rather than the crime itself, those "higher-ups" responsible became the investigation's focus, succeeded by the unraveling of the cover-up. Yet, according to Hougan, "something else was going on." In short, "there was a secret agenda at work." But there the mystery rests, for the time being. Friendly but definitely cagey, Hougan will only offer such provocative further utterances as "If you had the index to my book, you wouldn't recognize 90 percent of the names."

"Interesting theory" but also "absolutely bizarre" is how Woodward categorizes what he knows of Hougan's delvings. Hougan, who in 1978 published *Spooks: The Haunting of America—The Private Use of Secret Agents* with Morrow, claims that, despite the "many reporters and the many Senate committees, what we got was a distortion of the truth." Not that Woodward and Bernstein were *wrong*, you understand, just that they were reporting a different story. "Some Senate hearings got into matters that if they'd been pursued would have led them down the right path," Hougan hints. But, in case you're getting a headache thinking about the Nixon angle, *Secret Agenda* doesn't, the author insists, exonerate the former president in any way: At least *somewhere* in a political story that already, as Hougan says, fills "six bookshelves," we're on firm ground, right?