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Soviet Agents Double as Reporters

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In the Soviet Union, U.S. reporters are watched wherever they go. Television correspondents must take an official censor on filming trips. The office help in U.S. news bureaus allegedly is required to report to the KGB, the Soviet secret police agency.

In this country, Soviet reporters travel virtually where they wish. They have the same access as other reporters to government premises. They can interview anyone who will talk to them. Their films are shipped, uncensored, to the Soviet Union.

Secret files identify at least three Soviet reporters as KGB agents. The newspaper Izvestia's correspondents here, Stanislav Kondrashov and Yuri Barsukov, run an espionage operation, according to the files.

The files also claim that Visarion Sisnev, correspondent for the Soviet labor newspaper Trud, is a KGB agent. Official sources said that other KGB agents almost certainly pose as correspondents for the Communist Party paper Pravda, the Soviet news agency Tass and Moscow radio-TV.

Izvestia's Barsukov is a human vacuum cleaner who collects press releases, congressional

reports, military and foreign policy documents and every scrap of paper he can find on Capitol Hill.

His spectacled sidekick, Kondrashov, moves from office to office with the determination of a KGB interrogator.

Together with Sisnev, they have an unparalleled outpost on Capitol Hill for espionage. Kondrashov is accredited to the congressional press galleries, Barsukov, in Washington on a second tour, soon will be.

This accreditation gives them special access to information, including off-the-record briefings. They also share indirectly in the protection of the First Amendment. They develop friendships on Capitol Hill, which makes it awkward for federal authorities to monitor their activities.

The late FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, for example, didn't want his agents tracking suspects around the corridors of Congress. However, he made some quiet exceptions to the rule and to this day, the FBI keeps known KGB operatives under surveillance on Capitol Hill.

The FBI has been hampered, nevertheless, by a tight budget. Director Clarence M. Kelley has testified that more funds are needed to keep up with all the Soviet representatives—double

the number 10 years ago—in the United States.

Footnote: Only one of the three KGB journalists returned our calls. Barsukov, in response to our inquiry about his KGB affiliation, said: "I couldn't answer that stupid question." Asked if he would deny the charge, he growled: "I won't answer anymore," and hung up. A Soviet embassy spokesman said he had no knowledge that the three Soviet reporters are intelligence agents.

Strange Bedfellows—One of the world's strangest friendships has developed between Libyan strongman Muammar Qaddafi and Ugandan President Idi Amin. They are, in the judgement of diplomats, a couple of Mad Hatters.

Col. Qaddafi passes out weapons to terrorists while he seeks nuclear bombs for his arsenal. Presumably, he would bomb Israel if he could get his hands on the nuclear wherewithal. But this is by no means certain. He also has made dire threats against his Arab brothers, including Egypt's President Anwar Sadat and Jordan's King Hussein.

The irrepressible Amin is gaining notoriety as one of history's most infamous buffoons and thugs. Over the years, he has murdered 90,000 political

opponents. The latest to land on his execution list is a British lecturer who called Amin a "village tyrant" in an unpublished manuscript.

Amin and Qaddafi get together occasionally to exchange rhetoric about the enemies they are going to destroy. Last month, Amin ventured to Tripoli where the pair reaffirmed "strong brotherly relations."

Diplomatic insiders suspect, however, that Qaddafi is stringing Amin along. Three years ago, say our sources, Qaddafi talked Amin into breaking relations with Israel in exchange for a promise of weapons. Amin still is waiting for his guns.

He hasn't lost his faith, however, in his Libyan friend. During a confrontation the other day with Britain's Lt. Gen. Sir Chandos Blair, Amin suddenly began shouting to his ministers: "Alert the army! Alert the air force! Call Libya and tell Libya to begin sending airplanes here!"

Qaddafi sent no airplanes. He has promised, however, to build some hospitals in Uganda. But insiders believe the African dictator will get his hospitals about the same time he gets his airplanes.

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See also Anderson and Whitten, WXP 30 Jul 75.