

# The Secret Team



Colonel F. Fletcher Prouty

On Tuesday, March 6, Jack Anderson began his nationally syndicated column. The story, under the byline of the Central Intelligence Agency, was an advance copy of a book which is being written by the CIA's deputy chief of operations.

The book was Colonel F. Fletcher Prouty's "The Secret Team," due from Prentice-Hall this month (*PW Forecast*, February 15).

A week prior to Anderson's column, *PW* received a telephonic request for book rights—purportedly from the same source. Kramer Book Store in Washington had learned that Anderson had learned Prouty was being contacted by the publisher. *PW* learned of other efforts by the CIA to get hold of the Prouty galleys by numerous other unsuccessful devices. (As a regular practice, *PW* returns galleys only to the publisher of a given book, on request.)

Its curiosity about the book's author duly whetted, *PW* interviewed Colonel Prouty. Now 56 and retired from the Air Force since 1963 (he had served as a pilot in World War II), Prouty is currently employed in private business in Washington. Talking with *PW*, he proved forthcoming, both about the CIA and the genesis of his book.

"Since my retirement I've put in about eight years of work on my book," he

said, and he is a composite of a number of CIA operators. But the individual episodes are not accurate, they happened. And the book is on it. In 1961, according to Prouty, the year he wrote the famous story "The U-2 Incident" that led Bushrod to cancel his summit meeting with Eisenhower, a CIA spy plane had been downed in Russia. Its crew captured and then interrogated by Soviet intelligence, was later quietly returned to the U.S. (where James Earl Ray, an ex-TV man, recently informed that such a plane was among the downed). The earlier U-2 incident is one of Prouty's more astounding revelations in his book.

Prouty said, "So there was no CIA money spinning around that might have kept me from writing my book."

But as an Air Force officer, Prouty was assigned for some of the CIA's most secret operations in other countries. When the Agency needed planes and special material for a mission, Prouty was there in the Air Force.

For nine years preceding his retirement, Prouty had his own office in the Pentagon, doing, among other things, to custodian of secret CIA military files.

And so, some 60 or 70% of the Pentagon Papers were in his files. The Department of Defense segregated the CIA-type papers from regular military papers—and Prouty had them all, and knew what was in them. When Ellsberg gave the Pentagon Papers to the *New York Times*, Prouty was struck by only a few papers, but he dealt with the rest by "secretly" clearing them out of his files. Prouty was simply not there, Prouty said. Ellsberg got them, and Prouty thinks he may have been used innocently by the CIA when he worked on the papers at Rand.

In an early chapter of "The Secret Team," Prouty writes about some remarkable coup d'etat activities in a Latin American country he calls "Gandia" (but which readers are free to identify as Guatemala) and later he describes the CIA as arming thousands of Tibetans in support of the Dalai Lama against invading Red Chinese forces (an action which a wary President Eisenhower terminated).

"I wasn't involved in the Gandia affair," Prouty said. "As a matter of fact, my description of that Latin American

country is a composite of a number of CIA operators. But the individual episodes are not accurate, they happened. And the book is on it. In 1961, according to Prouty, the year he wrote the famous story "The U-2 Incident" that led Bushrod to cancel his summit meeting with Eisenhower, a CIA spy plane had been downed in Russia. Its crew captured and then interrogated by Soviet intelligence, was later quietly returned to the U.S. (where James Earl Ray, an ex-TV man, recently informed that such a plane was among the downed). The earlier U-2 incident is one of Prouty's more astounding revelations in his book.

"I was combat officer in charge of that plane's recovery," Prouty said. "I flew over the wreckage. And I was originally support officer in the Bay of Pigs assault—this was back in 1959."

But Prouty says so many Miami-based Cubans were involved then that the CIA's cover was compromised if not blown, and matters looked so dubious when Allen Dulles rushed invasion plans after JFK's 1960 presidential victory that, as Prouty put it, "I removed myself from the whole thing in a letter to the Secretary of Defense in January, 1961." Of all John F. Kennedy's intimate circle, Prouty told *PW*, "I think only Bobby Kennedy was beginning to see through what was happening."

Many of Prouty's old associates, he believes, some still active in the CIA, feel as he does now—that the CIA's operations, as opposed to intelligence activities, notably from the Bay of Pigs onward, have seriously drained the nation's strength and eroded its prestige.

Prentice-Hall, beginning with a 10,000-copy first edition, is at this writing ready to start a second printing. Colonel Prouty is booked for a TV-radio tour. Meanwhile he is set to write his next book, about the period October through December, 1963, which saw numerous significant assassinations including that of John Kennedy, and which he feels may have been the most crucial brief period in modern American history.

ALBERT H. JOHNSTON