

C.I.A. Agent Said to Give Secrets to Russian in 1972

Report That American Told the Soviet Operative What He Knew Emerges as Result of Watergate Inquiry

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WASHINGTON, July 3—A tale of a drunken and despondent C.I.A. agent who apparently sat down with a Soviet K.G.B. operative somewhere in Latin America and told him what he knew has emerged as a result of a Senate Watergate committee inquiry into the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

The K.G.B., the Soviet Committee of State Security, combines internal security and foreign intelligence functions.

A report issued by the Watergate committee yesterday contains a cryptic mention of a "W H flap" that highly reliable sources said today resulted from the conversation and its ensuing effect on many of the agency's clandestine operations. The initials "W H" are C.I.A. parlance for the Western Hemisphere.

The agent clearly provided information of value to the Russians, because the C.I.A.'s deputy director for plans later told the Watergate committee, according to its report, that the affair "threatened to compromise Western Hemisphere operations."

The C.I.A. man, believed to have been stationed somewhere in Latin America, was described by sources as "despondent," "disgruntled" with the agency and "in his cups" at the time of his brief, and perhaps unprecedented, contact with the Russians a little more than two years ago.

It could not be learned what specific information the American imparted, but the sources said today that the matter was still considered extremely sensitive.

One of the lesser agency secrets compromised in the conversation, however, was the fact that a Washington public relations concern, Robert R. Mullen & Co., had for years been providing "cover" for

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C.I.A. agents stationed abroad.

According to the Senate report, prepared by the Watergate committee's minority staff and released yesterday, the Mullen concern "has maintained a relationship with the Central Intelligence Agency since its incorporation in 1959."

At the time of the Watergate break-in, on June 17, 1972, one C.I.A. agent in Singapore and another in Amsterdam were said to be representing themselves as "overseas employes" of the Mullen company.

A number of other American multinational companies with interest in Western Europe or the Far East have traditionally furnished such "cover" for C.I.A. operations, according to intelligence sources.

At the time of the Watergate break-in, the Mullen Company employed E. Howard Hunt Jr., a retired C.I.A. operative who later pleaded guilty to having conspired to tap telephones at the Democratic party's national headquarters here.

Although the company's president, Robert F. Bennett, has said that the Mullen company was not serving as a cover organization for Mr. Hunt, the committee report says that "Hunt's covert security clearance was extended by the C.I.A." when he left the agency to join the company in 1970.

Mr. Bennett, the son of Senator Wallace F. Bennett, Republican of Utah, has headed the Mullen organization since 1971. The company handled publicity for President Nixon's 1968 campaign and reportedly helped to set up and administer Republican campaign finance committees that received \$232,500 from dairy industry representatives in 1971 and \$100,000 from Howard R. Hughes in 1972.

A July 10, 1972, memo from Martin Lukasky, Mr. Bennett's "case officer" at the C.I.A., refers to the "W H flap," according to the committee report, and "States that if the Mullen [company] cover is terminated, the Watergate could not be used as an excuse."

The agency's reluctance to tell Mr. Bennett outright that the company's cover had been brached, according to one

source, stemmed from its desire to conceal from the Russians its knowledge of the clandestine contact between the Russian agent and the C.I.A. man, who has since retired from the agency.

Report Is Disputed

This source said that he had been told that the C.I.A. had learned of the matter from another individual within the "Soviet apparatus," who apparently been privy to the K.G.B. man's account of the affair and whom the C.I.A. wished to protect.

Another source, however, said that that was "absolutely

not" the manner in which the information about the talkative American agent had reached C.I.A. headquarters in Langley, Va.

A spokesman for the C.I.A. said that the "W H flap" was still a highly sensitive matter. He declined to comment further, except to say that additional information had been provided to the Watergate panel and other Congressional committees.

The Watergate committee's minority staff received a number of classified documents from the C.I.A. in connection with its inquiry, including the July 10 memo from Mr. Lukasky and a follow-up report from him two weeks later.

Although the first memo suggested, according to the committee report, that "the agency might have to level with [Mr. Bennett] about the 'W H Flap,'" the C.I.A. apparently decided on a course of deception instead.

General Terms Used

The second Lukasky memo, the report said, "shows that the C.I.A. convinced Robert Mullen of the need to withdraw its Far East [Singapore] cover through an 'agreed upon scenario' which included a falsified Watergate publicity crisis."

The report also said that, while the C.I.A. had explained the "W H flap" in general terms to Senate investigators, it had not given "sufficient reason to withhold such information from Mullen nor explained the sig-

nificance of some to Watergate developments."

The connection to Watergate, according to a well-placed source, was more imagined than real. Mr. Bennett was reportedly told that an individual in Singapore, an island city at the tip of the Malaysian peninsula, had previously accused the Mullen representative there of being associated with the C.I.A. The agent denied his affiliation, the source said.

Some time between June 17 and July 24, 1972, Mr. Bennett was allegedly told, this same individual had approached the C.I.A. man bearing a copy of *The International Herald Tribune*, which is published in Paris, that contained an article on Mr. Hunt's erstwhile employment at the Mullen headquarters in Washington.

The accuser cited the article as proof that the Singapore agent's connection with Mullen indicated his affiliation with the C.I.A. Mr. Bennett was allegedly told, and the cover would therefore have to be discarded, which it was.

But, the source said, it was subsequently established that the entire incident in Singapore never took place.