

Employee of C.I.A. 'Cover' Quit 2 Years Ago

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SINGAPORE, July 5—A man who gave his name as Arthur H. Hochberg left Singapore hurriedly about two years ago, and has not been heard from since. He left in such a rush that he did not even tell his office landlord that he was pulling out and closing down his small office.

His two local employes were puzzled, as was the landlord, but they were not angry, for he had been a congenial employer who had paid his rent several months in advance. The landlord did have one small complaint, however—Mr. Hochberg had put a special lock on his private, inner office and the landlord had to bring in locksmiths to open it after Mr. Hochberg vanished.

All of this would not be very unusual in Singapore, which is, after all, an international commercial center where foreign businessmen come and go in large numbers, except that a couple of days ago, a report by the minority staff of the Senate Watergate committee revealed that the company Mr. Hochberg worked for has for many years been providing "cover" for Central Intelligence Agency operatives stationed abroad.

The company is Robert R. Mullen & Co., a Washington public relations concern. The

Senate committee came up with the information about Mullen as a by-product of its inquiry into the role played by the C.I.A. in the Watergate scandal. An article in The New York Times about the Senate report was reprinted in this morning's Straits Times, Singapore's main English-language daily.

The apparent reason for Mr. Hochberg's sudden departure from Singapore, according to the report, was that a short time earlier, a C.I.A. agent in Latin America, while drunk and despondent, had given away several agency secrets to a Russian intelligence agent, including the C.I.A. function of the Mullen Company.

Murky Connection

The Senate report said that the president of the Mullen Company, Robert F. Bennett, son of Senator Wallace F. Bennett, Republican of Utah, had not been told that the secret was out and that this was the real reason for having to close down the Singapore operation, but was instead given a cooked-up "scenario which included a falsified Watergate publicity crisis."

The connection between the Singapore episode and Watergate is extremely murky. The only possibly connective facts that are publicly known are that E. Howard Hunt Jr., a

former C.I.A. agent who pleaded guilty and was convicted for his role in the Watergate break-in, was employed by the Mullen Company at the time of the break-in on June 17, 1972, while at the same time retaining his C.I.A. "covert security clearance."

Also, the Senate report said that at the time of the break-in, a C.I.A. agent in Singapore and another in Amsterdam were said to be representing themselves as "overseas employes" of the Mullen Company.

Mr. Hochberg was the only known Mullen representative in Singapore at the time.

A very limited picture of his activities here emerged today from conversations with his office landlord and one of his former employes.

'A Very Fair Employer'

The employe, a secretary, described Mr. Hochberg as an American in his mid-30's who wore horn-rimmed glasses and had tight, curly hair. She said he was "a very fair employer" and a "cheerful" man. She presumed him to be a bachelor because he had no family with him in Singapore. She also had the impression that he did not lead an active social life here and kept fairly much to himself.

She said Mr. Hochberg resigned from the company when

he left and was not merely being transferred to another Mullen job.

She had not read the story about the C.I.A. and the Mullen company in this morning's newspaper, but when told about it and asked if she had ever noticed anything out of the ordinary during the year she worked for Mr. Hochberg, she answered in the negative. She described her work as routine business correspondence about public relations matters. She recalled letters to some banking houses and to a cargo container company.

A Modern Office

She said Mr. Hochberg had "his own small typewriter" in his private office. The office was in Suite 306 of the Cathay Building, which also houses a movie theater. It is a modern office, with wall-to-wall carpeting and Scandinavian-style office furniture. A Swedish shipping company now has the space once occupied by Mullen.

The former employe said that Mr. Hochberg opened the office and hired her in the summer of 1971 and left Singapore a year later in August, 1972. Before taking the office, she said, Mr. Hochberg had apparently worked alone out of his home, the address of which she could not remember.

She expressed puzzlement, not only over the haste of Mr. Hochberg's departure but also over the circumstances of the event—she said the Mullen Company wanted the office to remain open, but that Mr. Hochberg's resignation forced the shut-down.

Closing Was Forced

"His decision to resign caused the company to close," she said. "It was not the company asking him to leave. Which we found odd, because the company did not want to close but it had to because he resigned."

A spokesman for the United States Embassy here, asked for comment, said: "We never have any comment on alleged C.I.A. activities."

The landlord of the Cathay Building, who earlier in the day had talked freely about Mr. Hochberg's advance rent payments and about the subsequent trouble with his office locks, and who had invited a newsman to phone him later for more information—became silent when the newsman called back.

It could not be determined if Singapore or American authorities had spoken to him.