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The Conning Tower

)The writer is a former Senate investigator and intelligence analyst whose decade-long investigation of political assassinations has centered on inquiries into the federal investigative agencies.)

Allen Dulles, once chiefst spook of them all, called intelligence a craft.

Whether or not this is an accurate decription of other than the dirty-works that are referred to as "operations" and "plans" within the CIA, intelligence analysis, by far the most important amd productive aspect, is an art.

The essence of that art when clues are few is to ~~single~~ sieze a single fact and with the mind bulldog it to death.

In dealing with the spooks and the spookery it helps to keep several classics of literature in mind: Alice in Wonderland (particularly Through the Looking-Glass,"), The Purloined Letter, and 1984. But helpful as Carroll, Poe and Orwell are in understanding the spooks, one need also develop a sense of their special semantics. They use a different language in which commonplace words have special meanings. Thus when I tell the CIA quite openly that I have copies of their surveillance on me they have no reluct_{ance} in denying it in writing. The semantical nature of the denial lies in the impossibility of my ~~any~~ having a copy of a man on my tail.

Debate rages over "Operation Jennifer." It was an astounding intelligence coup, it is said, possible only because the secret was kept/^{so completely}for so long. To others it was a gigantic boondoggle, a waste of funds urgently required for other national needs.

Whichever is true - and who can really judge - there is a crucial false premise that seems to have escaped the press and the politicians.

Everyone missed that to-be-bulldogged fact, one so very obvious.

And all the major media missed a special one of its own.

By some special new magic of the craft, domestic intelligence having been fore-sworn, William Colby, Director, Central Intelligence, knew as soon as each ~~any~~ publication, wire-service and network learned of this so special and so ultra-secret project.

It is not new that Colby asked each to withhold the story in the "national interest." What is new is that he went out of his way to give each a full account of ~~XXXX~~ "Operation Jennifer," ostensibly so the urgency of keeping it secret could be appreciated and the secret kept.

(Here the fable of "The Emperor's Clothes" would have helped the learned and sophisticated editors.)

The Los Angeles Times had a front-page story but the Russians missed that. Importuned by Colby, the story was downplayed in subsequent editions. There were all these "nervous KGB agents," Times assures us (issued dated March 31), because none of them read the Times' front page or later editions. Those nervous agents seem also to have ~~xxx~~ survived not having read the syndicated version, too.

There continued, astoundingly enough from all accounts, this fantastic secret.

With virtually every major element of our news media fully informed about all the fascinating details of this unprecedented CIA accomplishment.

In my Whitewash IV: Top Secret JFK Assassination Transcript, I print in facsimile 90 formerly top-secret pages of a Warren Commission executive session the members never expected anyone would ever see. On January 27, 1964, the same Allen Dulles really let his hair down, as no Director, Central Intelligence, ever did.

It was a dramatic moment. A month after the "secret" reports that Lee Harvey Oswald had served Dulles and/or J. Edgar Hoover appeared in the papers the Warren Commissioners deliberated what they would do about these reports.

That the Commission wound up doing exactly what it agreed was not and could not be acceptable, contenting itself with pro forma denials it knew could not be depended on, while not my main point, is not irrelevant applied to the emerging of the "Project Jennifer" story.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ Nor is it irrelevant that to deny me this transcript for eight years the Government swore it was properly classified "Top Secret," which means it could have caused a new war. Actually it was not properly classified and for ordinary citizens this false swearing would have been the felony of perjury.

Sp Commissioner Dulles had to tell his fellows what former Director, Central Intelligence Dulles knew.

Would his people tell the truth. Warren Wanted to know. No, Dulles said.

"Eouldn't tell it under oath?" Warren persisted.

"I wouldn't think he would tell it under oath, & no...He ought not tell it under oath, " not even "to his own chief...if he was a bad one."

The only exception Dulles specified to his own not telling was the President. Need one remember more than Dulles @ own failure to tell JFK the full Bay of Pigs truth or the rupture of the Paris summit under Eisnehower to realize whether for the Director, Central Intelligence, there was any exception to speak false swearing? (pp.62-3)

that when
Dulles went farther, explaining/they kept records sometimes there were "hieroglyphics" and that one of his agents was perfectly capable of framing another. (p.61)

The thrust of Dulles' long-secret and now ignored disclosures is that to these dedicated people perjury is the prerequisite of patriotism and that any and all deceptions serve the national need. They alone, of course, fully appreciate this national need.

In plain English this means one can never taken their word. Not the Secretary of Defense (p. 63), not even the & president/

But the press did, with this "secret" project to capture a wrecked Soviet sub. Editors seem not to have ~~recognized~~ recognized the special clue they all had: Colby didnot have to tell all to persuade them to respect "national security." In the fullness of his briefings he actually prepared all for the detailed accounts that became the CIA's best public relations in its time of crisis.

And the single essential fact that nobody dulldogged is that there was no secret from the Russians. The secret was withheld from the American ~~paper~~ people only.

This truth does not rest on such dependable opinions as that of former Defense Secretary Laird. Russian satellites told them the entire story. Can it be imagined that they made no sense out of the travels of the Glomar Explorer and its monstrous barge? But if they did miss the obvious significance of that, could they possibly

have found no meaning or significance in the total disappearance of that enormous barge in the middle of the placid Pacific and its magical reappearance?

In the area they knew their sub was down?

The realities of intelligence are such that the Russians could not have helped knowing and understanding not later than the first news accounts of the Glenar Explorer's alleged purposes. The realities are that battalions of people just can't and don't keep secrets.

And the reality is that more than a decade earlier the science of from-satellite photography was such that, as Eisenhower told us, from the stratosphere the white lines in parking lots are clearly discerned.

But a football-sized barge that disappears and reappears by magic isn't?

The mystery of "Project Jennifer" is not in the alleged secrets in the outdated sub's conning tower of warheads. It is that the sophisticated editors to a man were conned. That they could be.