

Hoover Stops FBI Liaison With CIA

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The Federal Bureau of Investigation broke off direct liaison with the Central Intelligence Agency a year and a half ago because the CIA would not tell J. Edgar Hoover who had leaked information from his organization, according to authoritative sources.

As a result, high officials of the intelligence community are concerned about the government's ability to control foreign espionage in this country. Their apprehension has been increased by the recent British discovery of extensive Soviet operations.

To offset some of the danger, officials of the FBI and the CIA have held private meetings, unknown to Hoover, at which they exchanged information. Authorized communication is limited to mail, telephone and infrequent special meetings.

The suspension of direct contact is one of the factors prompting leading members of the intelligence community to feel that Hoover must be deposed as director of the FBI. The feelings of these officials run so high that some of them have dropped their customary secrecy to make their views known.

Adding to the anxiety and anger of members of the in-

telligence community is Hoover's reputation. In their view, his personality is a compound of insecurity and authoritarianism. They fear the 76-year-old director will do nothing to repair the breakdown in liaison between the two agencies and will try to remain as long as he can at the post he has held for 46 years.

The story of the severance of FBI-CIA liaison begins with the disappearance of Professor Thomas Riha in March, 1969. Riha was a Czech-born associate professor of modern Russian history at the University of Colorado.

The 40-year-old professor left the university abruptly, apparently took nothing with him and left a mysterious trail.

Friends and fellow faculty

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members said they feared that Riha might be dead, but police officials in Boulder and Denver and the former president of the University, Dr. Joseph R. Smiley, insisted that he was alive.

CONFIDENTIAL

What Smiley, by then president of the University of Texas at El Paso, could not say was that he had been given the information concerning Riha in confidence by an employee of the CIA.

The agency was interested in the Riha case because of the professor's Czech origin. It wanted to know if there had been foreign interference. The FBI learned that there had been no foul play, that the professor had chosen to leave for personal reasons.

According to well-informed sources, an individual agent in the FBI's large Denver office, acting on his own, told a CIA employee in Denver. (The CIA is restricted by law from operating as an intelligence agency within the United States. The employee in Denver was involved in recruiting.)

PLEDGE

The agency then suggested that the FBI tell Smiley, who was very concerned about

Riha's disappearance, what had happened on a confidential basis to quiet his and the community's fears. The Bureau refused.

After the refusal, the CIA went ahead and told Smiley, pledging him to secrecy. According to reliable sources, Smiley later inadvertently let it get out that there had been no foul play. The question

arose at FBI headquarters in Washington: How had the President of the University obtained this information?

When it was learned that an individual FBI man had told the story to a CIA man, Hoover asked the CIA which FBI agent it had been.

The CIA man in Denver was inflexible. He told his superiors that the information

had been given him in confidence and it was a matter of conscience.

The CIA man held his ground under pressure from the Bureau, saying any disclosure would be a breach of faith. The director of the CIA, Richard Helms, accepted his man's position and refused to force him to divulge the FBI man's identity.

Irritated, Hoover broke off all direct liaison with the CIA.

LIAISON MAN

Until February of last year, the FBI man who provided the personal link with the CIA was Sam Papich.

When Hoover took his action severing liaison, Papich was despondent. He is known to have beseeched the director in the strongest language to reconsider, pleading that close relationship between the two agencies was vital to controlling Communist-bloc intelligence operatives.

He is known to have told Hoover that the United States had never faced the kind of sophisticated and dangerous Soviet-bloc espionage that it did then, in 1970. He also argued that the complexity of intelligence cases, coupled with the swiftness of travel and communication, had made direct links necessary between the bureau and more than a dozen CIA officials every day.

Papich said that communications with the CIA by mail would be an impossible arrangement and warned Hoover that a continuation of the rupture might leave a dangerous gap, which enemy agents would very likely try to exploit.

RETIREMENT

Urging a reconciliation, Papich retired from the bureau in March, 1970, expressing the hope that Hoover would appoint a new liaison officer who might more easily smooth over the difficulties between the two agencies. According to reliable sources, Hoover never responded to his pleas.

In July of last year — four months after he had severed direct liaison with the CIA — Hoover abolished the seven-man section that maintained contact with the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Office of Naval Intelligence, Army Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the National Security Agency, the State Department, the Post Office, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the United States Information Agency, the Bureau of Customs and the Immigration Service. These agencies were disappointed and distressed at the new arrangement.

Hoover is reported to have said the work of the section could be properly handled by telephone and correspondence.