

Lasky Stays With Encounter, Derides Spender's

Special to The New York Times

LONDON, May 8 — The editor of Encounter, Melvin Lasky, won a vote of confidence today from the magazine's backers and decided to stay on the job.

Mr. Lasky dismissed as "a storm in a teacup" the resignation statement yesterday of Stephen Spender, contributing editor. Contributors to the British-American intellectual monthly, based here, also seemed to be coming to Mr. Lasky's support.

Mr. Spender, who helped found Encounter in 1953, said he was resigning because he had learned that Central Intelligence Agency funds had supported it for 10 years. He indicated that Mr. Lasky should quit also.

In 1964 the International Publishing Corporation of London, headed by Cecil King, took over Encounter's business management and financial burden. It was from the corporation that Mr. Lasky won crucial support today.

Mr. King's deputy, Hugh Cudlipp, said:

"The most important component part of an intellectual magazine of this type is, as everyone knows, the journalistic quality of its editorship. We consider that Encounter without Mr. Lasky would be as interesting as Hamlet without the prince."

The magazine's co-editor, Frank Kermode, also resigned over the C.I.A. fund question—although he came on in 1966, after the C.I.A. connection ended. He said today that he had quit because he thought he had been misled about the intelligence agency by Mr. Lasky.

"I was always assured that there was no truth in the allegations about C.I.A. funds," Mr. Kermode said. "On several occasions I gave false assurances about facts on which I had been led astray."

For example, Mr. Kermode said, The New York Times a year ago included in a series on the C.I.A. a statement that Encounter had received agency funds.

"This was denied," Mr. Kermode said, "and I associated myself with this denial."

He said the result of such episodes was that he lost the "foundation of confidence on which I could cooperate with my co-editor."

Mr. Lasky conceded today that he had made "a personal error" by being "insufficiently frank in explaining to Mr. Kermode what I had come to suspect had happened."

"This was a question of suspecting in 1963," he said, "that some of the foundations that were giving money to the Congress for Cultural Freedom

[which then sponsored Encounter] were not what they seemed. "We couldn't prove it, but we suspected it and took steps to end it. That's why we went to Cecil King and said, 'Take us over and we'll run an excellent magazine.'"

The Congress for Cultural Freedom is an organization of leading European and American intellectuals.

In a statement tonight, Mr. Lasky formally said for the first time that C.I.A. funds had reached the magazine. But he said he had not known this at the time.

An 'Unwitting Recipient'

"The editors were always informed by the congress that it was supported by various private American foundations, and until 1963 there was no reason to doubt this," he said.

"In fact, as it turned out, Encounter, like many other political, educational and cultural institutions throughout the world, was an unwitting recipient of funds which derived indirectly from the C.I.A."

The real point, Mr. Lasky said in an interview, was that Encounter's editorial policy had never been affected.

"We were fair, critical, controversial," he said. "We have tried to publish articles pro and con on every major intellectual issue—Vietnam, Cuba, everything. This is the ethos of the review."

"We've had a few lousy articles, that I'll admit. But that anyone tried to manipulate material improperly is ridiculous."

Mr. Lasky said he had had assurances of support today from a number of prominent contributors convinced of the magazine's independence, among them Hugh Trevor-Roper, Regius Professor of History at Oxford.

Colin MacInnes, a writer often critical of American policy, also backed Mr. Lasky and said he had never been asked "to distort my views in print."

He said: "Did they alter one word I wrote? Did they print things no one else would? Yes."

Has Support of Trustees

Mr. Lasky said he had the support of the magazine's four trustees as well as that of Mr. King. He said he had told them all "the full story, and they want me to stay on."

The Spender statement in New York broke a silence that had been maintained during weeks of personal dispute about the future of Encounter.

Last Friday evening it was agreed at a meeting to continue this silence until statements by all those concerned—including Mr. Spender, Mr. Lasky and Mr. Kermode—could be published in the next issue of Encounter. But Mr. Spender was not at the meeting and evidently did not agree with its decision.

Lord Goodman, a solicitor and chairman of the Arts Council, represented Mr. Spender and Mr. Kermode at the meeting.

Under the magazine's arrangement with the Interna-

C.I.A. Attack

tional Publishing Corporation, the corporation is responsible for Encounter's business side: selling advertisements and handling commercial operations.

Mr. Lasky said today that its "professionalism" had been highly valuable.

The corporation also undertakes to pay any deficit. Mr. King is believed to have put about \$280,000 into the magazine so far.

But Mr. Lasky said today that Encounter was now nearly breaking even and could soon run at a profit.

He said the circulation had gone up sharply from about 13,000 nine years ago. The current print order, he said, is 43,000. This rise and the quality of the King organization's management has nearly balanced the books, he said.