

PRESS CLIPS

BY ALEXANDER COCKBURN

CIA Sex Blunder

I'm afraid I must record a blunder by the CIA. Both Senate and House reports on U.S. intelligence activities have mentioned a film sponsored by the CIA and produced by Robert Maheu—formerly Howard Hughes's aide—in the early 1950s. It was called "Happy Days," and was a porno flick which purported to show Sukarno, then in charge of Indonesia, in ecstatic sexual congress with a woman.

The CIA's crafty plan was to circulate this film, pretending that it had been secretly made by the KGB in the course of a visit by Sukarno to the Soviet Union. The notion was that when Sukarno discovered that his most intimate moments had been thus recorded he would fly into humiliated rage, reverse Indonesia's entire political and diplomatic strategy, and become a loyal adherent to the American imperium.

There was one thing wrong with the idea. According to a one-time lobbyist for Sukarno in Washington, the Indonesian strongman was not all that he seemed. His reputation was that of being one of the most active and successful priapic potentates in the Orient, and, for that matter, the Occident too. Not so, says the lobbyist. Sukarno was cursed with an extreme case of premature ejaculation. Women emerged from his embraces unsatisfied, pregnant only with ridicule. But the film showed him leaving his Russian partner aglow with fulfillment. Sukarno, said the lobbyist, would have been delighted with the film and ordered its instant distribution throughout the Indonesian archipelago. Lack of adequate research, I'm afraid. The CIA did, I think, once hide in a men's lavatory and steal a specimen of Sukarno's urine, to see whether he had diabetes. Flushed with piss and pride, they did not know what they were missing.

CIA Triumph

Despite this error in judgment, it looks as though the CIA—or, more loosely, the U.S. intelligence establishment—has been keeping a signal triumph from the attention of the American people.

On December 13, 1975, Mr. Gough Whitlam's Australian Labor party was finally swept from power in a general election. A far more conservative administration is now in office, already reversing Whitlam's attempts to render his country more independent of American and Japanese mastery of its valuable natural resources. Similarly, all question of increasing Australian control of the enormous U.S. communications base at Pine Gap has now been abandoned.

What were the circumstances which led up to these events, so favorable to the United States?

As is well known, the crisis which precipitated the election was inaugurated by Sir John Kerr, the governor general of Australia. With the Australian Senate deadlocked over the prospective budget, Sir John made the unprecedented move of dissolving the entire parliament, thus in effect calling for a general election at an extremely awkward moment for Whitlam, since his cabinet was plagued with financial scandal. Sir John's coup d'etat occurred on November 11, 1975. From sources such as a most interesting article by an Australian journalist in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, here is the scenario.

Shortly before November 11, Whitlam had characterized an American citizen, Richard Lee Stallings, resident in Australia, as a member of the CIA, and furthermore a personal friend of Douglas Anthony, head of the National Agrarian party, which now shares power with the Liberals. At the same time, the Australian *Financial Review* had also called Stallings a CIA agent, adding that he had, in 1967 and 1968, directed the secret communications base at Pine Gap, in central Australia. Anthony, minister of the interior in the administration before Whitlam came to power, had rented to the U.S. the land on which the base was built.

On November 6 the Australian published a quasi official statement from the U.S. State Department, denying that Stallings worked for U.S. intelligence. Anthony then put down a question, to be asked of Whitlam in parliament, about Stallings's actual status. The head of the Australian Defense Department, Sir Arthur Tange, tried to forbid Whitlam to answer the question, citing "grave threats to national security."

On November 10 the Australian Security Intelligence Organization received a telegram from its Washington representative. According to the Australian *Financial Review*, the telegram stated that the representative had been advised by the CIA that recent developments in Australia had endangered the exchange of intelligence data. Another Australian paper, the *National Citizen*,

reported that the telegram stated that Stallings was in fact a member of NSA (the National Security Agency) and that his exposure would imperil "the deep cover" of four other NSA agents in Australia.

Whitlam was to answer Anthony's question about Stallings on November 11. The Australian press also predicted that in the course of this reply Whitlam would reveal hitherto secret details about Pine Gap. Pine Gap has been described as one of the most important U.S. communications bases outside the U.S. itself. In the words of Malcolm Salmon, an Australian journalist describing this saga in the February issue of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, "it is a vital element in the U.S.'s worldwide strategic dispositions. One of its many functions is to track Soviet missile submarines in the southern hemisphere, particularly in the Indian Ocean."

*Sukarno's sexual
secret . . . incredible
but true: the
CIA came through . . .
how James Baldwin
brought about the fall
of Jeremy Thorpe.*

Many sources in Australia cite its importance in the development of U.S. first strike capability."

Negotiations over the renewal of the American lease on the base were due to start on December 10. It was believed that conceivably Whitlam would simply annul the lease—which would apparently have cost the U.S. about \$1 billion. At the least he would have attempted to increase Australian supervision.

It was on November 11, with Whitlam due to answer the vital question, that Sir John Kerr struck, and dissolved the Australian parliament. It was a move unparalleled in Australian constitutional history and, at the time, many Australian commentators voiced doubts about its legality.

Who is Governor General Sir John Kerr? He was, before his appointment, a lawyer and very close to the Democratic Labor party, a right-wing breakaway from the Australian Labor party. Sir John had represented trade unions splitting away from Communist and Labor-dominated federations. According to Salmon, "The close relationship between the violently anti-Communist leaders of the Democratic Labor party and the American Embassy in Canberra was a notorious fact in Australian political life."

Sir John had also been closely associated with groups known to be in receipt of CIA funds—the Association for Cultural Freedom and the Law Association for Asia and the Pacific. The latter outfit, of which Sir John was president between 1966 and 1970, got money from the Asia Foundation in San Francisco, often described as a CIA conduit. Sir John had also been a director of General Motors-Holden, GM's Australian subsidiary, and an adviser of Esso, Exxon's subsidiary, which was seeking to develop oil and natural gas reserves in Australia. Finally, Sir John had a background in Australian intelligence. During the Second World War he set up Australian police, military, and intelligence networks in New Guinea.

This was the man who precipitated the downfall of Whitlam's government, and thus the return of a pro-American administration. It was an exercise that recalls the proudest and most successful moments in the CIA's history, before it became an apothecary's shop for depilatory powders and poisoned clams on the half shell. In postwar European history, men such as Sir John were everywhere to be found, their activities lubricated by CIA funds and their political position invariably on the right-wing end of the social democratic spectrum. At the very least, the magnificent saga of Sir John should be widely publicized, to give comfort to those who feel, in these dark days, that the CIA simply cannot put a foot right.

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