C.I.A. Established Many Links To Journalists in U.S. and Abroad

The following article was written by John M. Crewdson and is based on reporting by him and Joseph B. Treaster.

One day several years ago, a correspondent for a large Middle Western newspaper, arriving in Belgrade, was asked by some colleagues whether he would like to meet his newspaper's local "stringer."

Knowing that his newspaper did not employ anyone in Belgrade, or so he thought, the correspondent ascended the stairs of the stringer's hotel, only to glimpse the man racing down another set of stairs on his way, he shouted, to catch an airplane for Prague.

The correspondent was puzzled, but said he learned later that the man had been an operative of the Central Intelligence Agency, fleeing to protect his "cover," and that he had obtained his press credentials directly from the newspaper's publisher.

He and the publisher had agreed to keep the matter as their secret, apparently never anticipating that one of the newspaper's legitimate correspondents might turn up unexpectedly.

That instance was but one of dozens uncovered during a three-month inquiry by The New York Times into the C.I.A.'s three decades of involvement with the communications industry at home and abroad, and especially its relationships with American journalists overseas.

In interviews with scores of past and present intelligence officers, journalists and others with knowledge of the situation, The Times checked the names of 200 individuals and organizations whom various sources identified as having possible intelligence connections.

C.I.A.: Secret Shaper Of Public Opinion

Last of Three Articles

Nearly 20 correspondents were found who said they had refused offers of employment by the agency.

But The Times also obtained the names of more than 30 American journalists who have worked since World War II as paid intelligence operatives, in most cases for the C.I.A. and at least a dozen other American reporters who, although

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C.I.A.'s Numerous Links With Journalists Differed Widely in Degree and Value

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unpaid, were counted by the C.I.A. among its operational "assets."

In addition, at least 12 full-time C.I.A. officers have worked abroad over the last 30 years while posing as employees of American-owned news organizations.

Of the more than 70 individuals identified by The Times as falling into one of these categories, several are dead and a score could not be located. But a number of the others confirmed their involvement, and several spoke freely about their experiences, though nearly all requested that their names not be used.

"I want to live over here in a country that I like without having to worry about getting a bomb through my window," said one man, a former correspondent for ABC News who worked for the C.I.A. in the 1950's.

At ABC, William Sheehan, a senior vice president, has said that the network is "satisfied there was no one on our staff in such a dual role."

All of those interviewed, like one man who had been a Time stringer in Rome, insisted that they had been able, though in some cases at psychological cost to themselves, to maintain a separation between their intelligence work and their journalistic careers.

None said that the C.I.A. had ever encouraged them to slant their dispatches to suit its purposes or to compromise themselves journalistically in any other way.

Some expressed fear that publicity would cost them their jobs or make future employment more difficult. The C.I.A. made no financial provision to lessen the shock of separation when it terminated relations with the last of its reporter-agents last year, and one of them, until recently a CBS reporter in Europe, is wrapping packages in a Florida department store.

The Cold War Climate

Several of the journalists and C.I.A. officials interviewed made the point that during the height of the Cold War it was acceptable to cooperate with the agency in ways that both the C.I.A. and the journalistic community now deem inappropriate.

"The thing to do was to cooperate," said one retired intelligence officer. "I guess that looks strange in 1977. But cooperation didn't look strange then."

Earlier this month, the C.I.A. made public a new executive order proscribing, except with the explicit approval of the Director of Central Intelligence, any paid or unpaid operational relationships with reporters for general circulation American news organizations.

The agency's long-standing relationship with American journalists was first called to public attention in 1973, when William E. Colby, then the Director of Central Intelligence, provided reporters in Washington with some of the details on a background basis.

The Washington Star reported on the practice, and that led to investigations by two Congressional committees. One of the panels, the House Select Committee on Intelligence, will hold hearings on the subject beginning today, and its Senate counterpart is also considering a public inquiry.

The issue was renewed three months ago when Carl Bernstein, the freelance investigative reporter, wrote in Rolling Stone magazine that some 400 American journalists had "secretly carried out assignments" for the C.I.A. since the agency's founding in 1947, in many cases with the knowledge and approval of top news executives.

However, all of the past and present C.I.A. officials who were interviewed in The Times's investigation were unanimous in asserting that the number of journalists who have been on the C.I.A.'s payroll was, as one former official put it, "quite modest."

"If you scan a history of 25 years, you could come up with totals like 40 or 50 people," the former official said. Others put the total as high as 100.

In that time there have been literally thousands of correspondents for domestic news organizations working abroad.

Several former intelligence officers pointed out that the C.I.A. itself does not know precisely, and probably can never know, how many American journalists have been on its payroll over the years. Agency files are widely scattered and incomplete, they say, and some of the arrangements made abroad may never have been recorded at C.I.A. headquarters.

A Delayed Effect

As attention to the C.I.A.'s past attempts to use the press in its propaganda efforts has been renewed in recent months, correspondents overseas have reported that intensified suspicions among citizens of other countries have made news gathering more difficult.

A poll by The Times of its own foreign correspondents produced several reminders that in some parts of the world American journalists, like those of most other countries, have always been suspected of serving as intelligence operatives on the side.

But one correspondent cabled from India that "a rather new practice among some of us is to avoid public contacts with known C.I.A. people." Such contacts, he wrote, "might only confirm suspicions."

In all, the three-month investigation by The Times found that at least 22 American news organizations had employed, though sometimes only on a casual basis, American journalists who were also working for the C.I.A. In a few instances the organizations were aware of the C.I.A. connection, but most of them appear not to have been.

The organizations, which range from some of the most influential in the nation to some of the most obscure, include ABC and CBS News, Time, Life and Newsweek magazines. The New York Times, The New York Herald Tribune, The Associated Press and United Press International.

Also included were the Scripps-Howard chain of newspapers, The Christian Science Monitor, The Wall Street Journal, The Louisville Courier-Journal and Fodor's, a publisher of travel guides.

Among the lesser known organizations were the College Press Service, Business International, the McLendon Broadcasting Organization, Film Daily and a defunct underground newspaper published in Washington, The Quicksilver Times.

Edward W. Estlow, president of Scripps-Howard, said that although some of the organization's correspondents might have had such connections "back in the old days, we combed our organization thoroughly about five years ago" and could find none at that time.

For the most part, according to past and present C.I.A. officials, the journalists who worked for the agency were a mélange of stringers and freelance writers with a few staff correspondents thrown in.

Stringers and freelancers, the officials said, were free from the demanding schedules of the top foreign correspondents for major news-gathering organizations and were also more likely to be in need of the extra money that such service provided.

One former senior official said that he had always preferred "hard-plodding" reporters with anti-American reputations, men "who found not enough satisfaction in their jobs" rather than those seeking monetary rewards. "I wasn't after mercenaries," he said.

In general, the pay was not high. Several former station chiefs said that a local stringer who performed occasional chores might be paid as little as $50 a month. For others more heavily engaged, the sum might increase to a few hundred dollars.

Where cover jobs were involved, the money was passed through the financial offices of the news organizations, but in most cases the agency preferred to pay its agents through accounts in large New York banks

Reporters for major publications likely to have better access to foreign officials and broader local contacts were sometimes offered amounts equal to their regular salaries, however. Wayne Phillips, while a reporter for The Times in New York in the early 1950's, said he was offered $5,000 a year by the C.I.A. if he agreed to work for them abroad.

Another man, a correspondent for Time magazine in Brazil, said he was offered a similar sum about the same time. Keyes Beech, the longtime Far Eastern correspondent for The Chicago Daily News, said he had been offered $12,000 a year by the C.I.A. "to make inquiries and deliver messages" as he made his rounds in Asia.

Mr. Beech and the Time correspondent said they declined the C.I.A.'s offers, and the arrangement with Mr. Phillips fell through because of complications.

In nearly all of the organizations where employers were found to have aided the C.I.A., executives said, in some cases after conducting internal inquiries, that they had no knowledge of past relationships between their correspondents and the C.I.A.

Eugene Fodor acknowledged in an interview that he had allowed C.I.A. agents to "cover" themselves abroad by working as reporters for his series of travel guides. "They were all highly professional, high-quality," he said of the agents. "We never let politics be smuggled into the books."

Another who acknowledged a connection was Elliott Haynes, with his father a co-founder of Business International, a widely respected business information service. He said that his father, Eldridge Haynes, had provided cover for four C.I.A. employees in various countries between 1955 and 1960.

Employer Not Informed

In many instances, sources said, the management officials were unaware that they had harbored C.I.A. agents or officers on their staffs, and several former agency officials said that in cases where a working reporter was recruited as an agent there was no requirement that his superiors be advised.

On occasions when he added an American journalist to his string of agents, one former official recalled, "I didn't ask to what extent his employer knew about this activity."

Most of the reporter-agents, sources said, were asked to sign agreements pledging to keep secret any confidential information that came their way. But the agreements also bound the C.I.A. to a pledge of confidentiality, and the former official said that most of the reporters "wanted it for their own protection."

Only in instances where "cover" was supplied by a news organization for a legitimate C.I.A. officer, officials said, was the management of the organization certain to know of the arrangement.

In a number of such cases, the jobs they provided involved not the reporting of news but such subsidiary functions as advertising, circulation and distribution. Over an eight-year period in the 1950's, for example, three business managers in the Tokyo office of Newsweek were reporting to the C.I.A.

Edward Kosner, Newsweek's executive editor, has said that the magazine's policy "as long as I've been around here is that Newsweek employees work for Newsweek and Newsweek only." But he added, "I can't really go back into ancient history."

But jobs as correspondents were provided as well, and in some instances the C.I.A. went so far as to reimburse the news organization for the added cost involved. "We might contribute money for an office, or the expansion of an office," one former C.I.A. man said.

Even then, according to several sources, it was not likely that top news executives would be called upon to arrange the details, even though most C.I.A. directors, especially Richard Helms and the late Allen Dulles, have been close friends with the chief executives of some of the nation's most influential news organizations.

Keeping a 'Lofty' Plane

When such men met, as they frequently did, it tended to be on what one C.I.A. official called a "lofty" plane. "They reviewed the world," he said, adding that he had never heard a discussion of the recruiting of reporters or the providing of cover, "and I was there for brandy and cigars on several occasions."

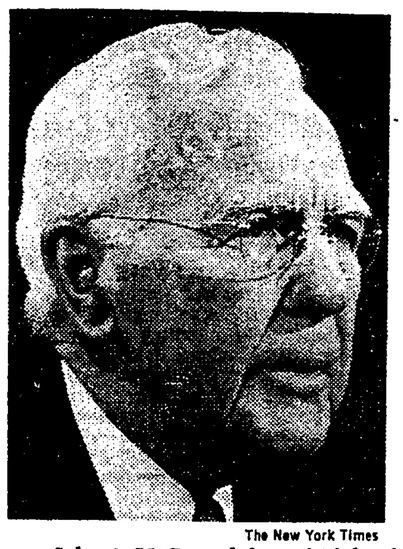
Mr. Dulles is dead. Mr. Helms, reached at his residence in Washington, said "I've decided that I won't talk about this, ever." Mr. Colby has consistently declined to comment in any detail.

But John A. McCone, who was Director of Central Intelligence from 1961 until 1965, confirmed the impressions of other agency officials about the absence of top-level involvement.

In an interview at his Seattle home, Mr. McCone said: "As far as any top-level discussion with Time or Newsweek or the Washington Post or The New York Times, saying, 'Look, we need a stringer over in Brazil and we'd like him to be under Newsweek cover,' there was none of that, to my knowledge."

Mr. McCone said that there had also been no high-level discussions of which he was aware that related to the C.I.A.'s employment of American journalists abroad on a part-time basis.

"I would think if there were any formal relationships," Mr. McCone said, "they would have to be renewed. I wouldn't say any responsible publisher would say, 'I've got an arrangement with Allen Dulles and it goes without saying that I have the same thing with John McCone.'"



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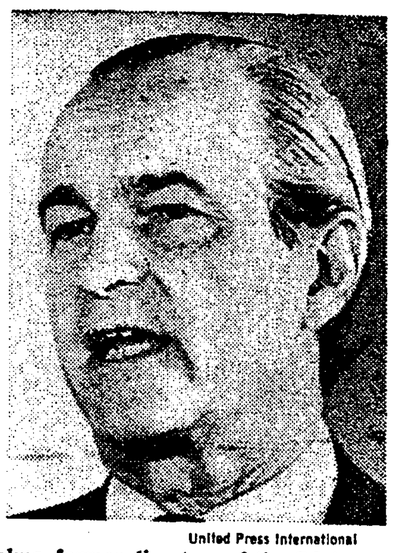

United Press International

John A. McCone, left, and Richard Helms, former directors of the C.I.A.

Asked whether anybody had come to him after he took over from Mr. Dulles to renew such an arrangement, Mr. McCone replied, "Nobody."

Major Outlets Used Most

In The Times's study it appeared that the C.I.A. relied on its connections with Time, Newsweek, CBS News and The Times itself more extensively than on its contacts with other news organizations.

Several sources said that there had been nothing in the files given by the C.I.A. to the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence last year to indicate that such men as Henry Luce, the founder of Time Inc., or Arthur Hays Sulzberger, for many years the publisher of The New York Times, had ever been asked for or had ever given their personal approval for such arrangements.

The Times has said repeatedly that it can find no record of such arrangements nor anyone on its staff with knowledge of them.

Edward S. Hunter, a retired C.I.A. man who was Newsweek's Hong Kong correspondent in the late 1940's, said he believed that only Harry Kern, then the magazine's foreign editor, and not Malcolm Muir, the magazine's founder, had been aware of his intelligence connections.

Mr. Kern said that if he ever had been aware of such a relationship he could not recall it, and Mr. Muir said he had never known that "Newsweek chaps" had been taking money from the C.I.A.

The situation with respect to William S. Paley, the chairman of CBS Inc., is less clear. Sig Mickelson, a former president of CBS News, has said he was in Mr. Paley's office some years ago when two C.I.A. representatives acknowledged that Austin Goodrich, the network's Stockholm stringer, was working for the C.I.A.

CBS said in a statement that Mr. Paley did not recall that meeting, although he did remember a meeting with Mr. Mickleson and someone from the C.I.A. to discuss "arranging press credentials for a C.I.A. agent to be assigned to an area of key interest to the agency, but of minor interest to CBS News."

"No one currently at CBS," the statement said, "knows whether these credentials were indeed arranged."

When such arrangements were struck, one agency official said, they were most commonly worked out "at the middle-management level" within both the C.I.A. and the news organizations involved, but even then on an almost casual basis.

No Binding Contracts

"It was not formal, there were no contracts, nothing that would carry over," the official said. "It was simply an understanding. There were meetings sometimes to talk. But it was never, never reduced to any kind of formal understanding."

The official would not identify the middle-level news executives who had participated in making such arrangements, some of whom are understood to still be active in the news business.

One C.I.A. agent who worked on an American newspaper, Robert Campbell, acquired a reporting job several years ago with The Courier-Journal in Louisville, Ky. The C.I.A. had intended, one official said, to give Mr. Campbell some newspaper experience before sending him abroad under journalistic cover, but because of complications he never went overseas. Executives of The Courier-Journal said that they never knew until after Mr. Campbell had resigned that he had been with the C.I.A.

One C.I.A. official said that the Ridder chain of newspapers, now part of the Knight-Ridder organization, had agreed to take part in a similar arrangement, as had the San Diego-based Copley News Service.

B. H. Ridder Jr., vice chairman of Knight-Ridder and president of Ridder Publications, said: "If any such services were rendered they would have been rendered only at the request of the Government. I'm not at liberty to discuss these matters, frankly."

Copley has said that none of its executives had any knowledge of such arrangements with the C.I.A., and none of the sources interviewed could provide the names of any Copley correspondents who had ever simultaneously been on the C.I.A.'s payroll.

One former Copley correspondent recalled, however, that at important news events in Latin America over the years she would sometimes find herself surrounded by as many as a half-dozen strangers bearing Copley credentials. Upon inquiring of editors in San Diego, she said, she was invariably told that she was the only Copley correspondent on the scene.

C.I.A. officers working under journalistic cover were not immune from the often-considerable pressures faced by those of their colleagues who pose as American businessmen abroad or who work under other "non-official" cover.

Equal attention must be paid to both careers. "Journalistic cover will not stand up for any period of time," one former C.I.A. man said. "The local newspapermen will spot a phony, unless he is prepared to spend 99.9 percent of his time in bona fide work, in which case he's just about useless to us."

One such example is Robert G. Gately, a C.I.A. officer who took a job in the late 1950's as Newsweek's Far Eastern business manager in Tokyo. When his work for the magazine began to suffer, he could not tell his immediate superiors about the other matters that were occupying his attention and so lost his job.

He wound up in the Tokyo office of Asia Magazine, a regional newspaper supplement published in Hong Kong, only to lose that job as well for poor performance.

Reached at his home in suburban Washington, Mr. Gately declined to answer any questions about his past employment.

One indication of the general lack of knowledge among news executives about the industry's ties to the C.I.A. was the astonishment recorded in the New York offices of The Times some years ago when the newspaper's correspondent in Germany mentioned in a letter that Henry Pleasants, a stringer who reviewed music for the paper, was also chief of the C.I.A.'s Bonn station. After the disclosure, The Times terminated his work for the newspaper.

The same absence of knowledge at the highest levels appears to have been the case with other news organizations as well. Several of the editors closest to the late Henry Luce, for example, said he never gave them any indication, if he knew it, that any of Time magazine's reporters were on the C.I.A. payroll.

James Linen, for 11 years the publisher of Time, said that although he never knew for certain that any of his correspondents were working for the C.I.A., "I always assumed that some of them must have been." But he said he never took steps to find out.

Assurance for Some

A number of major news organizations have asked the C.I.A. for information about any connections that their employees may have had with the agency, and in some cases partial assurances have been supplied.

For example, Benjamin Bradlee, executive editor of The Washington Post, said his newspaper had been told by the C.I.A. that records going back to 1965 did not disclose any ties with its staff correspondents, but that it was the agency's policy "not to comment on stringers."

Even those news executives who had close working relationships with the C.I.A. in this country might not be told which of their correspondents overseas were working for the agency.

Joseph G. Harrison, the longtime foreign editor of The Christian Science Monitor, said that he had been "happy to cooperate" with the C.I.A., in the 1950's, providing the agency with letters and memorandums from correspondents that contained background information not included in their dispatches, and occasionally assigning a story in which the C.I.A. had expressed an interest.

But Mr. Harrison said he had never known that one of his reporters in the Far East was also serving as a C.I.A., political adviser to the Asian head of state about whom he was writing.

Not oll of the American journalists with intelligence connections were paid by the C.I.A. One, Panos Morphos, a war correspondent for Newsweek in Central Europe, was an agent of the Office of Strategic Services, the C.I.A.'s World War II predecessor.

A few others, according to C.I.A. officials, were believed to be paid agents of foreign intelligence services, some of them friendly and some not. One, a Time magazine correspondent in Eastern Europe, was working for a Soviet-bloc intelligence service. But a former Time editor said the magazine had known of the connection and "considered it a kind of double bonus."

At least one other journalist may have been a double agent. Edward K. Thompson, the former managing editor of Life magazine, said he had been told in 1960 by an American intelligence official that one of the magazine's contributors was working simultaneously for the C.I.A. and a hostile foreign intelligence service. He said that Life never again employed the man.

Several former C.I.A. officials spoke of a minor "flap," the agency's term for a compromising situation, that they said occurred in the mid-1950's in the Mideast when the management of a major American news organization discovered that one of its correspondents had secretly been working for the agency.

Declining Practice

No formal directive was issued within the agency then or later requiring the approval of management in future cases. But the agency's use of reporters for prominent news organizations began to decline, partly because approval from C.I.A. headquarters became harder to obtain and partly because, as one former official put it, "it was felt that they would refuse you and that their bosses wouldn't let you do it."

Besides, the former official said, to take advantage of the local contacts of the principal correspondents in a foreign capital "all you really had to do was go to the cocktail parties they invited you to."

Accordingly, the agency's emphasis in recruiting began to shift away from the largest news organizations and toward the less prominent ones. In Tokyo, where the Newsweek office alone had contained at least four C.I.A. employees during the 1950's, a C.I.A., man named Glenn Ireton was sent out in the mid-1960's as a correspondent for Film Daily.

Mr. Ireton is dead and Film Daily is out of business.

Before an offer of employment could be made to an American journalist, agency sources said, it was necessary for C.I.A. investigators in the United States to quietly check the reporter's background for any signs that he or she might prove to be a security risk.

One agency official acknowledged that the investigations were carried out without the subject's knowledge, but explained that under C.I.A., regulations "any time you have anything to do with a guy you've got to run a check on him."

In most cases the investigations amounted to a formality, but one former station chief recalled that a married couple living in Mexico City, both distinguished correspondents whom he had considered prime candidates for recruitment, had failed to pass the background check because of purported left-wing associations.

One former C.I.A. station chief talked about the reasons for approaching a local correspondent, whom he described as "the guy who knows where all the skeletons are, what's the real story on so and so. The station chief, a new one, makes an appointment with him. They talk. The agency man has information to make him look good. If those meetings don't prove fruitful to the agency man they will end. So it behooves the journalist to make them useful."

While they did not qualify as agents of the C.I.A., such correspondents were often considered "assets" of the local C.I.A. station and catalogued in the agency's files that way.

Not all of the relationships between journalists and the C.I.A. involved money, nor were all of them formed abroad. Many correspondents who have spent their careers in Washington have developed close friendships with senior C.I.A. officials.

Charles J. V. Murphy, while a writer for Reader's Digest, was asked by Allen Dulles after the latter left the C.I.A. in 1961 to help him prepare his memoirs, and was actually given office space at the agency's headquarters. The memoirs never appeared, and Mr. Murphy lost his office shortly after it was discovered by John McCone, Mr. Dulles's successor.

New York Liaison

Several large American news organizations were themselves considered assets, though in a different sense, and in New York, where most of the major publishing and broadcasting organizations have their headquarters, one man in the C.I.A.'s Manhattan office was assigned as the liaison with several publications.

The man, who is still on active duty and asked that his name not be used, was a frequent visitor at Life magazine, where he viewed unpublished photographs taken by the magazine's worldwide battalion of photographers.

He was also known as a frequent luncheon companion of editors at The New York Times, where his chief interest seemed to be which correspondents were soon to return to the United States on home leave and might be available for debriefing.

Until a few years ago it was virtually common practice for American correspondents returning home or preparing to go abroad to spend time with the C.I.A.'s experts on their region of the world, and the practice continues, though less extensively than in the past.

Frequently, according to former agency officials, such reporters were asked to keep alert for certain items of information of interest to the C.I.A. when they reached their foreign posts, and many cooperated.

At yet another level of relationships, the C.I.A. would sometimes pay the expenses of a correspondent who agreed to undertake such tasks, especially if he were visiting an area where the agency was not well represented.

"If a guy was going to Iraq," said one former officer, "the C.I.A. would say, 'Will you stay a couple of extra days if we pay your expenses?'" He said that many did.

One journalist who was said by a senior C.I.A. official to have accepted travel money was Hal Hendrix, who as a reporter for The Miami News won a Pulitzer Prize for his stories on the 1962 Cuban missile crisis.

Mr. Hendrix said in an interview that he had never had anything beyond a "normal journalistic relationship" with the C.I.A. and that he had never accepted money from the agency for any purpose.

Mr. Hendrix, the official said, was considered an asset by the agency, and part of the confusion over the number of journalists with past C.I.A. relationships may be attributable to the distinction, clear to those inside the agency but not to many outside it, between the two.

"The essence of an agent," one official said, "is that he is under some degree of control and carries out assignments because you are paying him to so do." An "asset," on the other hand, can be anyone the C.I.A. finds useful as a source of information or in any other way.

Errands for the Agency

One such individual, a C.I.A. official said, was Kennett Love, a former New York Times correspondent in the Middle East who, though never paid, had what the official described as "a cooperative relationship" with the C.I.A. in which he "ran errands."

Reached at his home in California, Mr. Love said that shortly after the overthrow of Premier Mohammed Mossadegh of Iran in 1953, he helped the C.I.A. distribute copies of a declaration naming Ardeshir Zahedi as Mr. Mossadegh's successor. But Mr. Love said he had not known at the time that Joseph C. Goodwin, the American official who had asked him for help, had been a C.I.A. man and that he had never knowingly done anything else for the C.I.A.

Another journalist said to have been an "asset" was Jules DuBois, the late Latin American correspondent for The Chicago Tribune, described by one former official as "well and favorably known" to the agency though never on its payroll.

When Harold G. Philby, the British double agent, was living in Beirut in the years before he defected to the Soviet Union, the C.I.A., its suspicions aroused but not substantiated, kept a careful watch on his movements.

Several Americans in Beirut were engaged to help, officials said, including Sam Pope Brewer, then a correspondent for The New York Times who, by one authoritative account, had been an agent of the Office of Strategic Services while a Chicago Tribune reporter during World War II.

"We were all told to keep an eye on Philby, and Sam was one of us," said a former C.I.A. official. Mr. Brewer died last year.

For several years in the 1950's and 1960's, former agency officials have said the C.I.A. placed great stress on the number of assets "recruited" by each C.I.A officer working abroad. As a result, one, said, a number of people were listed as assets "who didn't even know they'd been recruited."

In such instances, the official said, an individual might be entirely unaware that what he viewed as a social relationship with a C.I.A. officer was taken far more seriously by the agency.

Several longtime C.I.A. hands expressed considerable skepticism about the value of an American journalist as an intelligence agent, particularly in Africa, Asia or the Middle East, where he would be more likely to stand out.

"If you're seriously interested in espionage," said one former station chief, "you don't run around with guys who are sailing through Jakarta for a couple of weeks. All they want to do is pick your brain. I would treat them like the plague. What can a white-faced American journalist do for you, anyway?"

But others disagreed. In one case, a retired C.I.A. man recalled that a correspondent "could do things for me. They were marginal, they were not clandestine. He would ask questions, snoop around. There was no money, no subversion. But he could do these things."

Once a reporter had signed up, the C.I.A. would provide him with training in the "tradecraft" of espionage, the use of secret writing, how to conduct surveillance or arrange for clandestine meetings and the like.

Training Varied

The training, another former station chief said, was "tailored to each case" and might last "a day, sometimes a week, sometimes longer."

"In no case," he added, "did we try to make real spies out of the media people. It doesn't pay to give them the whole course."

Far from approaching the adventures of James Bond, the assignments given journalists most commonly amounted to writing longer, more detailed versions of the dispatches they had filed to their news organizations.

Not infrequently, the reports to the C.I.A. were spiced with unprintable gossip and innuendo that might be helpful to the agency in gaining an advantage with a foreign political figure—"whose wife was jealous of what minister," as one former C.I.A. man put it.

Another former officer said that oftentimes a reporter would be "immensely valuable to any intelligence-gathering operation. He can move around town. He can open a post office box, he can open a safehouse, he knows how to get a telephone in a place where it sometimes takes three years."

The value of such individuals, the man said, was more as "a support asset, not necessarily somebody you want to use as a spy."

There were, however, some instances in which American journalists had considerable value as intelligence operatives, especially in Europe. "He could talk with people that the station and the Embassy couldn't," one C.I.A. man said. "He could identify and talk with Soviets, could travel places we couldn't." An example of this cited by the C.I.A. man was the Soviet Union. "It was considered much too risky to have deep-cover men there," he said. "The only person we had there for years was an economist."

In rarer instances—there were at least two several years apart in Hong Kong and Beirut—the C.I.A. attempted, successfully in one case, to use American reporters for the tricky assignment of acting as an intermediary with a member of a foreign intelligence service who wanted to defect to the United States, a delicate task usually reserved for skilled professionals.

At least once, the agency even used an American reporter in an unsuccessful effort to induce another reporter to "defect." During the armistice talks in Korea, sources said, the C.I.A. persuaded Edward Hymoff, then a correspondent for the International News Service, to offer $100,000 to Wilfred Burchett, the Australian journalist who had formed a close relationship with the North Korean Communists.

Mr. Hymoff said he argued with C.I.A. officials that Mr. Burchett could not be won over, and that proved to be the case.

Other American reporters also recalled having done tasks for the C.I.A. that, they said, seemed somewhat silly to them at the time.

Flattery by the C.I.A.

Noel Busch, a reporter for Time magazine in the Far East, said he had been asked in the mid-1950's by the agency to interview an Asian political figure for an in-depth profile.

Mr. Busch said he told the agency that the man was not of sufficient importance that Time or any other magazine could possibly be interested in such a story, but he said the C.I.A. agreed to pay him $2,000 for the article if no one else wanted it.

No one else did, and Mr. Busch said he later learned that the C.I.A. had simply wanted "to flatter this guy through an approach by an American correspondent." He said he left Time soon afterward to join the Asia Foundation.

Perhaps more typical was the C.I.A. agent, a stringer for Time in a remote Asian capital, who was assigned to "circulate in local society and report what she heard." The agent was finally let go after several years of reporting that there was nothing worthwhile to report.

Executives of several news organizations pointed out that it was far more difficult for them to exercise control over the activities of their part-time reporters, or "stringers," than over those of staff correspondents.

Fred Taylor, executive editor of The Wall Street Journal, said that one of his European stringers had been an employee of the C.I.A. a decade ago and that he had never known it, nor could he confirm or deny it now. "Who the hell knows what stringers were up to?" he said.

The work was not without its serious, and even dangerous aspects, however. Darriel Berrigan, a New York Times stringer in Bangkok and a C.I.A. agent for many years, was murdered under mysterious circumstances in 1966.

Some intelligence officials believe that the C.I.A.'s new and more stringent regulations governing relationships with American journalists will prove transitory, a pragmatic response to the current controversy over the agency's past relations with the press.

"The pendulum will swing," said one man who held a senior position in the C.I.A. for many years, "and someday we'll be recruiting journalists again."

When that day comes, he added confidently, "I will have no problem recruiting. I see a lot of them, and I know they're ripe for the plucking."

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