The C.I.A.'s 3-Decade Effort To Mold the World's Views

Agency Network Using News Organs, Books and Other Methods Is Detailed

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

For most of the three decades of its existence, the Central Intelligence Agency has been engaged in an unremitting, though largely unrecognized, effort to shape foreign opinion in support of American policy abroad.

Although until recently the C.I.A. counted a number of American journalists among its paid agents, with a few notable exceptions they do not appear to have been part of its extensive propaganda campaign.

C.I.A.: Secret Shaper Of Public Opinion
First of a Series

Instead, the agency has channeled information and misinformation through a once-substantial network of newspapers, news agencies and other communications entities, most of them based overseas, that it owned, subsidized or otherwise influenced over the years.

The C.I.A.'s propagandizing appears to have contributed to at least some distortion of the news at home as well as abroad, although the amount and nature of misinformation picked up by the American press from overseas is impossible to determine.

Recent attention given the C.I.A.'s involvement with the press has been focused on reports that the agency employed American reporters as agents and numbered others as sources of information or "assets" useful to its operations.

The recurring allegations have led the House Select Committee on Intelligence to schedule hearings on the matter, beginning Tuesday, and prompted The New York Times to survey the C.I.A.'s relationships with American news organizations.

While the three-month inquiry by a team of Times reporters and researchers indicated that the C.I.A. employed relatively few of the many hundreds of American journalists reporting from abroad over the past 30 years, there emerged a broad picture of an agency effort to shape news and opinions through a far-flung network of news organizations that it controlled to a greater or lesser degree.

The C.I.A. has refused every appeal for details of its secret relationship with American and foreign journalists and the news-gathering organizations that employed them, even though most have been brought to an end.

One C.I.A. official, explaining that such relationships were entered into with promises of "eternal confidentiality," said that the agency would continue to refuse to discuss them "in perpetuity."

But in interviews with scores of present and former intelligence officers, journalists and others, the scope and substance of those relationships became clearer. Among the principal features that emerged were the following:

¶The C.I.A. has at various times owned or subsidized more than 50 newspapers, news services, radio stations, periodicals and other communications entities, sometimes in this country but mostly overseas, that were used as vehicles for its extensive propaganda efforts, as "cover" for its operatives or both. Another dozen foreign-based news organizations, while not financed by the C.I.A., were infiltrated by paid C.I.A. agents.

¶Nearly a dozen American publishing houses, including some of the most prominent names in the industry, have printed at least a score of the more than 250 English-language books financed or produced by the C.I.A. since the early 1950's, in many cases without being aware of the agency's involvement.

¶Since the closing days of World War II, more than 30 and perhaps as many as 100 American journalists employed by

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C.I.A. Attempted to Shape Public Opinion Toward U.S. Policy Over Three Decades

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a score of American news organizations have worked as salaried intelligence operatives while performing their reportorial duties. A few others were employed by the American military and, according to intelligence sources, by some foreign services, including the K.G.B., the Soviet intelligence agency.

¶Over the years at least 18 American reporters have refused C.I.A. offers, in some cases lucrative ones, to undertake clandestine intelligence assignments. Another dozen employees of American newspapers, wire services and news magazines, though never paid, were considered by the agency to be valued sources of information or assistance.

¶In the last 30 years, at least a dozen full-time C.I.A. officers have worked abroad as reporters or noneditorial employees of American-owned news organizations, in some cases with the approval of the organizations whose credentials they carried.

According to a number of former C.I.A officials, the agency's broad campaign of propaganda was carried out with the awareness that the bogus news stories it planted might be treated as genuine by the American media, which they sometimes were.

The agency's legislative charter has been interpreted as prohibiting the propagandizing of Americans, but it says nothing about the propriety of the domestic effect, inadvertent or intentional, of propaganda disseminated overseas.

Lyman B. Kirkpatrick, for many years the C.I.A.'s Inspector General, said he could not recall any agency employee's ever having raised questions about the ethics or legality of its endeavors in mass communications.

Lawrence R. Houston, its retired general counsel, said it had always been his understanding that the C.I.A. was forbidden by law to employ American journalists, although he said no one had ever consulted him on that matter.

The C.I.A.'s efforts to mold foreign opinion ranged from tampering with historical documents, as it did with the 1956 denunciation of Stalin by the late Nikita S. Khrushchev; to embellishing and distorting accounts that were otherwise factual, such as the provision of detailed quotes from a Russian defector; to outright fabrication, as with a report that Chinese troops were being sent to aid Vietnamese Communists.

Most C.I.A. propaganda was planted overseas, but it was once 'commonplace,' a former agency official said, for United States newspapers to pick it up.

According to former C.I.A. officials, the agency has long had an "early warning network" within the United States Government that advises diplomats and other key officials to ignore news stories that have been planted by the agency overseas. The network, they said, has worked well, with only occasional failures.

But there is no such mechanism for alerting newspapers, magazines and broadcasting stations in this country as to which of the foreign dispatches that come chattering across their teletypes are distorted or, in a few instances, altogether false. There is, the former officials say, simply no practical way of letting Americans know that some of the stories they read over their morning coffee were written not by a foreign correspondent but by a C.I.A. officer in a corner of some American embassy.

Domestic 'Replay' of Items Was Considered Inevitable

The C.I.A. accepts, as an unavoidable casualty of its propaganda battles, the fact that some of the news that reaches American readers and viewers is tainted with what the Russians call "disinformation." The agency has even coined terms to describe the phenomenon: blowback, or replay, or domestic fallout.

"The particularly dangerous thing" about bogus information, a former senior agency official said recently, "is the blowback potential. It's a real one and we recognize that."

A 1967 C.I.A directive stated simply that "fallout in the United States from a foreign publication which we support is inevitable and consequently permissible." Or as one succinct former C.I.A. man put it, "It hits where it hits."

The agency's favorite medium for launching what it terms "black," or unattributed, propaganda has always been the foreign-based media in which it has had a secret financial interest, or the reporters and editors overseas who were among its paid agents. At one time, according to agency sources, there were as many as 800 such "propaganda assets," mostly foreign journalists. Asked in an interview last year whether the C.I.A. had ever told such agents what to write, William E. Colby, the former C.I.A. Director, replied, "Oh, sure, all the time."

Most often, former officials have said, the C.I.A.'s propaganda consisted of factual accounts that the agency felt were not being widely reported, or of essentially accurate accounts with some distortions or embellishments. But one authoritative former official said that "there were outright fabrications, too."

There seems to have been little question that in its efforts to mold opinion the C.I.A. viewed citizens of foreign countries as its principal targets. As one veteran C.I.A. officer who had conducted his share of propaganda operations put it, "I didn't want Walter Lippmann. I wanted the Philippine Walter Lippmann."

Some former agency employees said in interviews, however, that they believed that apart from unintended blowback, some C.I.A. propaganda efforts, especially during the Vietnam War, had been carried out with a view toward their eventual impact in the United States.

And although nearly all of the American journalists employed by the C.I.A. in years past appear to have been used for the collection of intelligence or the support of existing information-gathering operations, a few cases emerged in which such agents became, knowingly or otherwise, channels of disinformation to the American public.

Associated Press

William E. Colby

Asked in an interview last year whether the C.I.A. had ever told foreign journalists, working as paid agents, what to write, he replied, "Oh, sure, all the time."

One agency official said that the C.I.A. had in the past used paid agents in the foreign bureaus of the Associated Press and United Press International to slip agency-prepared dispatches onto the news wire. In some cases, as in the A.P.'s Singapore bureau in the early 1950's, the agents were natives known as "local hires." But in others they were Americans.

Although the A.P. and the U.P.I. are two of the most promient news-gathering organizations in the world—the A.P. estimates that its dispatches alone reach half the world's population in some form—they were given no special consideration by the C.I.A.

"We would not tell U.P.I. or A.P. headquarters in the U.S. when something was planted abroad," one C.I.A. official said, and he conceded that as a result such stories were likely to be transmitted over those agencies' domestic news wires, "if they were any good."

U.P.I. has said it was satisfied that none of its present employees is involved in any way with the C.I.A. but that it was unable to say what might have happened in the past. An A.P. executive said his organization had investigated similar reports in the past and had concluded "that none of its staffers was involved in C.I.A. activities."

One story good enough to be widely disseminated, former officials said, was a report in the early 1950's, fabricated by the C.I.A. and put out by an agent inside one of the major American wire services, that Chinese troops were on board ships steaming for Vietnam to aid the Communists in their battle with the French.

Though such examples of propaganda planted directly with American news organizations were relatively rare, another former C.I.A. official asserted that throughout the 1950's and 1960's, when the agency's propaganda network was at peak strength, it was "commonplace for things to appear in the U.S. press that had been picked up" from foreign publications, some but not all of them "proprietaries," in which the C.I.A. had placed propaganda.

Sometimes, the foreign publishers and editors were unwitting of the origin of such stories, but more often they were what the C.I.A. called "witting." The agency preferred, one official said, to give its propaganda "to somebody who knows what it is." Where that was not possible, he said, "You gave it to anybody."

Propaganda Was Planted In a Multitude of Ways

The propaganda took many forms and surfaced in many forums. It ranged, officials have said, from the innocuous, such as letters to the editor in major American newspapers that did not identify the writer as an agency employee, to items of far more consequence, such as news reports of Soviet nuclear weapons tests that never took place.

Such stories were planted in a variety of ways besides the use of media "assets." One common focus of propaganda activity, former officials said, was the press clubs that exist in nearly every foreign capital, which serve as mail drops, message centers, hotels and restaurants for local correspondents and those just passing through.

Until a few years ago, one former official said, the manager of the Mexico City press club was a C.I.A. agent, and so was the manager of the local press club in Manila.

"He used to work very successfully," a C.I.A. man with many years in the Philippines recalled. "Some guys are lazy. They'd be sitting at the bar and he'd slip them things and they'd phone it in."

With more diligent correspondents, the man continued, "it was a matter of making stuff available if they wanted to use it. My mission was to get local people to write editorials. This would be material that wouldn't be coming out of the embassy. It wouldn't be a U.S.I.A. handout. It would be from some thoughtful local commentator and it would hopefully carry more weight."

The United States Information Agency, an arm of the State Department, has the official responsibility for spreading the American message overseas. According to several former C.I.A. officials, the U.S.I.A. was aware, though sometimes only dimly, of the agency's propagandizing.

"One of the problems that never really got settled journalistically," a former C.I.A. man recalled, "was the relationship between U.S.I.A. and the C.I.A.'s media activities. They knew, but they didn't have the force or the funds to do anything about it."

From the C.I.A.'s standpoint, its own "black" propaganda was far more effective than the "white," or attributed, version put out by U.S.I.A. to anyone who would listen.

In Argentina, for example, while the U.S.I.A. was openly making motion pictures available to groups interested in various facets of life in the United States, the C.I.A.'s clandestine agents were tampering with the newsreel accounts of world events shown in local theaters.

The thrust of that particular operation, one C.I.A. man recalled, was "to get the American point of view across regarding Castro in the hemisphere. The Argentines didn't believe Castro was any threat, they were so far away. So we'd get the event on film and then make up the commentary."

One of the most ambitious of the C.I.A.'s propaganda efforts occurred in June 1956, a few months after Mr. Khrushchev, then the Soviet leader, delivered a "secret" five-hour speech to a closing session of the 20th Communist Party Congress in Moscow from which all foreign delegates had been excluded.

As word seeped through to the West that Mr. Khrushchev had broken in stunning fashion with Stalin, his predecessor, whom he described as a savage, half-mad despot, the word went out within the C.I.A. that a copy of the text must be obtained at all costs.

Amended Text Was Given To C.I.A. Outlets Abroad

By late May, the agency's counterintelligence staff had succeeded in obtaining a text in Poland. A few days later it was released to American news organizations through the State Department, and the C.I.A. ever since has cited its obtaining of the "secret speech" as among its greatest triumphs of intelligence.

What it has not said about the matter, however, is that the text it obtained was an expurgated version, prepared for delivery to the nations of Eastern Europe, from which some 34 paragraphs of material concerning future Soviet foreign policy had been deleted.

Although the text made available to United States newspapers was the genuine expurgated version, another text, containing precisely 34 paragraphs of material on future foreign policy, was put out by the C.I.A. over several other channels around the world, including the Italian news agency ANSA.

The 34 paragraphs in the foreign version, former officials said, were written not by Mr. Khrushchev's speechwriters, but by counterintelligence experts at C.I.A. headquarters in Virginia. The effort to cause consternation in Moscow was said to have been a brilliant success.

One dilemma posed by the C.I.A.'s use of its media assets abroad, especially those published or broadcast in the English language, was that they were likely to be closely watched by American correspondents not fluent in the local language and thus became prime sources of potential "replay" in the United States.

Former agency officials have said that the English-language assets were used with impunity under the C.I.A. charter, on the ground that the intended propaganda target was not American correspondents or tourists traveling abroad but English-speaking foreigners, a rationale that one former agency man said "always seemed absurd to me."

Agency Fostered the Spread Of Stories to Other Nations

Within foreign countries, the agency did all it could to foster "replay." In Latin America, for example, lest its disinformation efforts be forgotten as soon as they had appeared, the agency began an operation, known by the cryptonym KM FORGET, in which stories planted in one country were clipped and mailed to others for insertion by local media assets. Such efforts enhanced the likelihood that the stories would be seen by an American correspondent and transmitted home.

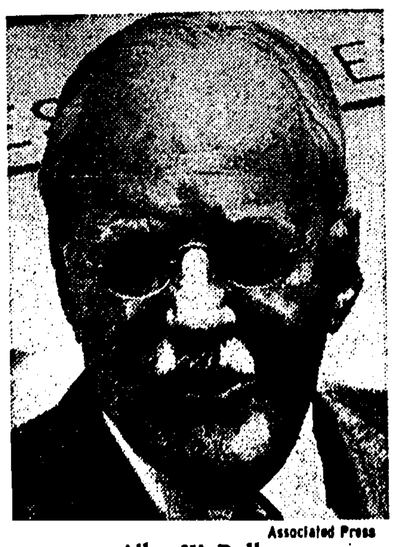
In spite of the agency's insistence that domestic fallout was unsought but unavoidable, there is some evidence that it may have been welcome in certain cases.

One of the C.I.A.'s most extensive propaganda campaigns of the past decade was the one it waged against Chilean President Salvador Allende Gossens, a Marxist, in the years before his election in 1970 and until his overthrow and death in 1973.

According to the report of the Senate intelligence committee, millions of dollars were spent by the C.I.A. to produce a stream of anti-Allende stories, editorials and broadcasts throughout Latin America.

A C.I.A. propaganda assessment obtained by the committee, prepared shortly after Mr. Allende's election in September 1970, reported a "continued replay of Chile theme materials" in a number of Latin American capitals, with pickups by United States newspapers.

"Items also carried in New York Times, Washington Post," the summary went on. "Propaganda activities continue to generate good coverage of Chile developments along our theme guidance."



Associated Press

Allen W. Dulles

In 1954, he told a New York Times executive that he did not believe the paper's Mexico correspondent was capable of reporting with objectivity on impending Guatemala revolution.

In interviews, a number of former C.I.A. officers spoke about what they said were, to them, unmistakable attempts to propagandize the American public indirectly through "replay" from the foreign press.

One agency official recalled the heavy propaganda campaign waged by the C.I.A. during the Vietnam War, conducted along the lines that "whatever bad happened in Vietnam had to be the enemy's fault."

A former C.I.A. official recalled that at the time of the "incursion" by American forces into Cambodia in the spring of 1970, the Hong Kong station "got a cable from headquarters instructing us to have all our assets present this in as favorable a light as possible."

Most of the Chinese in the region, the man said, resented the American military presence in Southeast Asia and were only further inflamed by the favorable portrayal of the motives for the American invasion and of its success. But he noted that the newspapers in which the slanted stories appeared were read by a number of influential American correspondents.

Some American Reporters Got Misleading Information

One of the reasons for the C.I.A.'s wide use of foreign "assets" in its black propaganda efforts, another former official said, was that most American journalists, even those on the agency's payroll, were too scrupulous to "take stuff they knew was phony."

But other sources cited some occasions on which American reporters accepted misleading information from the C.I.A. in the belief that it was legitimate.

As a rule, one former C.I.A. man said, such stories were fundamentally accurate, though with "embellishments" supplied for operational purposes. He recalled one such report, a dispatch to The Christian Science Monitor from Rangoon nearly 20 years ago, that he said "was really dressed up."

The dispatch by a Monitor special correspondent, Arnold Beichman, was an account of a young Russian named Aleksandr Kaznacheyev, who some months earlier had walked into the American Embassy in Rangoon and asked for asylum. Asked about the nature of the embellishment, the former C.I.A. man replied, "Defectors usually don't have very good English."

Mr. Beichman's account contained extensive quotes from Mr. Kaznacheyev, some of them remarkably well phrased, about the "hatred" for the Soviet system that had driven him from his homeland.

According to the article, the quotations were taken from a tape recording that Mr. Kaznacheyev had made. But Mr. Beichman said in a recent telephone interview that he could not now say where he had obtained the quoted material. "I can't say if I heard a tape recording or saw a transcript," he said. "I don't know how to check it."

Mr. Beichman said that he had never met Mr. Kaznacheyev, but had "pieced the story together from officials in the American Embassy." "For all I know," he conceded, "he might never have been in the embassy. It might have been a fraud."

There have been other instances over the years in which American news organizations were taken in by the C.I.A. One former agency official recalled, for example, a riot at a Soviet trade fair in the Far East that he said had been staged by the C.I.A.

The agency, the man said, later planted an article with a major American magazine that cited the "riot" as evidence of dissatisfaction with the Russians in that part of the world.

Some correspondents, as well, were quick to acknowledge that they had been duped on some occasions by the C.I.A.

One reporter, a Latin American specialist, recalled that a few years back he had met with a C.I.A. station chief in a country he would not identify who gave him what appeared to be an exclusive story. The local Communist Party, which had until then been following a peaceful line in seeking power, was said by the station chief to have a cache of 400 rifles provided by outside supporters.

Correspondent Learned That Story Was Unfounded

The correspondent, unable to check the information, decided to use it rather tentatively, in an article on the general situation in the country. Later he found the C.I.A. material had been unfounded.

Another instance in which the C.I.A. passed information to an American journalist, according to an agency official, involved C. L. Sulzberger, the foreign affairs columnist of The New York Times.

The C.I.A. official, who in the past has had access to relevant agency files, said that a column about the Soviet K.G.B. that appeared on Sept. 13, 1967, under Mr. Sulzberger's name in The Times was, "verbatim," a briefing paper that the C.I.A. had prepared for Mr. Sulzberger on the subject.

Mr. Sulzberger has denied that he ever "took a paper from the C.I.A. and put my name on it and telephoned it to The New York Times."

In addition to its efforts to make the news, the C.I.A. has also attempted on several occasions to intervene directly with American news organizations to shape the way in which they report it.

In some cases the agency's overtures have been rebuffed and in others they have been accepted. Some news organizations, sources have said, have even provided the C.I.A. with the opportunity for such intervention without being asked.

One former official recalled an instance several years ago in which the now-defunct Collier's magazine received an article from a correspondent in the Far East, mentioning that two ostensibly private corporations in the area, Sea Supply in Bangkok and Western Enterprises on Taiwan, were the C.I.A.'s principal operating proprietaries in that part of the world.

Lyman B. Kirkpatrick

He could not recall any C.I.A. official's ever questioning the ethics or legality of the agency's endeavors in mass communications.

The editors of Collier's, the former official said, submitted the article to the C.I.A. for censorship. The agency officer who read the manuscript pointed out that the C.I.A.'s links with both corporations were an open secret throughout the Far East, but the magazine killed the article anyway.

A large part of the C.IA.'s efforts at domestic censorship appear to have been concerned with impending news accounts not about world affairs but rather about its own operations.

In the months before the 1961 invasion of Cuba by C.I.A.-trained exile forces at the Bay of Pigs, for example, the agency was successful in halting the publication of several stories, including a major article by David Kraslow, then of The Miami Herald, about the training of the exile forces in Florida.

Mr. Kraslow, now publisher of The Miami News, said that his editors had asked him to take the details he had uncovered to Allen W. Dulles, then head of the C.I.A., and that Mr. Dulles had cautioned that their publication would not be "in the national interest." Soon afterward, the C.I.A. moved the training from Florida to Guatemala.

Agency Denigrated Book After Trying to Suppress It

Three years later, when David Wise and Thomas B. Ross published "The Invisible Government," the agency's first reaction was to try to suppress the volume.

Among other things, the C.I.A. seriously considered a plan to buy up the entire first printing of the book to keep it from public view.

Cord Meyer Jr., the C.I.A. official in charge of many of the agency's propaganda activities, visited Random House, the book's publisher, and was told that the agency was welcome to purchase as many printings as it liked but that additional copies would be produced for public sale.

That idea was abandoned, but former C.I.A. officials have said that a propaganda campaign was initiated to encourage reviewers to denigrate the book as misinformed and dangerous.

The C.I.A.'s involvement with mass communications in this country was sometimes aimed at censoring impending accounts of the agency's own activities.

Mr. Meyer, who is still a senior C.I.A. official, declined to talk about this episode or any aspect of his career with the agency.

What one former senior agency official described as another "period of great crisis" for the agency occurred two years later, in 1966, when the Washington bureau of The New York Times set out to produce a series of articles aimed at determining whether the C.I.A. did in fact amount to an "invisible government."

Cables were sent by editors to most of The Times's overseas bureaus, asking correspondents to file memorandums on several aspects of C.I.A. operations in their areas, and the former official recalled that the consternation within the agency was nearly immediate.

The agency's fear that The Times might divulge some sensitive secrets abated, however, when the newspaper submitted the articles in advance of publication to John A. McCone, who by then had retired as Director of Central Intelligence. According to Tom Wicker, then the chief of The Times Washington bureau, Mr. McCone removed some elements of the series before it appeared.

The inquiry by The Times unearthed yet another occasion in which the C.I.A. interfered with the newspaper's reporting. In 1954 Allen Dulles, then the chief of the C.I.A., told a Times executive that he did not believe that Sydney Gruson, the newspaper's correspondent in Mexico, was capable of reporting with objectivity on the impending revolution in Guatemala.

Mr. Dulles told The Times that his brother, John Foster Dulles, then Secretary of State, shared his concern, and he asked that the newspaper keep Mr. Gruson, whom the agency believed to have "liberal" leanings, away from the story.

It did not become known until several years after the overthrow of Col. Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán, the leftist Guatemalan leader, that the C.I.A. had played a central role in fostering the revolution that led to his downfall. There is some evidence in agency files that the C.I.A. feared that Mr. Gruson's reporting was edging toward a premature discovery of its role.

Mr. Gruson, now an executive vice president of The Times, said in an interview that he had learned later that Arthur Hays Sulzberger, then the newspaper's publisher, had complied with the C.I.A.'s wishes by contriving to keep him in Mexico City and away from Guatemala during the revolution, on the pretense that he had received a tip that the fighting might spill across the border into Mexico.

Not all of the C.I.A.'s propaganda efforts have been conducted through the news media. For example, some of the thousand or so books published by the C.I.A. or on its behalf have contained propaganda ranging from tiny fictions to outright deceptions.

One such book, sources said, was "The Penkovsky Papers," published for what the Senate intelligence committee called "operational reasons" by the C.I.A. through Doubleday & Company in 1965. The book purports to be a journal kept by the Soviet double agent, Col. Oleg Penkovsky, in the months before he was unmasked by his Soviet superiors, tried and executed. In the book, the colonel's name was transliterated according to C.I.A. style.

Although the information in the book was largely authentic, sources said that it had not been taken from Colonel Penkovsky's journal—which did not exist—but was compiled from C.I.A. records by Frank Gibney, then an employee of The Chicago Daily News, and Peter Deriabin, a K.G.B. defector employed by the C.I.A.

"It was not a diary," said one C.I.A. official, "and it was a major deception to that extent." Another former official acknowledged that the book had been "cosmetized," and a third added drily, "Spies don't keep diaries."

Authors Were Assisted For Operational Purposes

Reached by telephone in Japan, Mr. Gibney conceded that "the journal as such did not exist." He said he had taken most of the material directly from reports of the C.I.A.'s interviews with Colonel Penkovsky during his brief visits to the West.

In several other instances, agency sources said, the C.I.A. has assisted authors with books that it felt might serve some operational purpose, even where the agency had no hand in preparing the manuscript.

One such case, sources said, was the agency's decision to cooperate with John Barron in his research on a recent book about the Soviet K.G.B. That decision, sources said, was a response to the K.G.B.'s publication a few years before of a small volume, largely accurate, entitled "Who's Who in the C.I.A."

That book named dozens of C.I.A. officers, along with some American diplomats and others who have never had any connection with the agency, and the C.I.A. is still angry over the combined deception and large-scale "burning," or identification, of its personnel by a hostile intelligence service.

The Barron book contains a 35-page compendium of names of K.G.B. officers serving under various covers around the world. Mr. Barron said in an interview that although he had received "quite a bit of help" from the C.I.A., the list of names had been compiled from a variety of sources worldwide.

One of the more intriguing C.I.A. disinformation campaigns of recent years was its attempt to discredit the Cuban revolutionary movement in the eyes of other Latin American nations by planting the suggestion that it was controlled to some extent from Moscow.

The agency's strategy, one official said, was to take an East German woman named Tamara Bunke who had joined the guerrilla band of Maj. Ernesto Ché Guevara in Bolivia and make her out to be "the biggest, smartest Communist there ever was," as well as an operative of the East German Ministry of State Security and the Soviet K.G.B.

Asked how the agency had disseminated its fabrication, the official recalled that it had provided "material and background" to Daniel James, an American author and former managing editor of The New Leader, living in Mexico, who pubished a translation of Major Guevara's Bolivian diaries in 1968.

In his introduction, Mr. James noted that Miss Bunke, who had taken the nom de guerre of Tania and who is scarcely mentioned in the diaries, had nonetheless been identified a few months earlier by a low-level East German defector as an agent of the East German security agency.

C.I.A. Portrayal of Woman Helped Make Her a Hero

Mr. James did not provide any support in the book for his assertion that, during her time with Major Guevara's group, Miss Bunke was "attached to the Soviet K.G.B." He said in an interview that that had been his own conclusion, although he acknowledged having talked to the C.I.A. in connection with the book.

"I did get information from them," he said. "I got information from a lot of people." He said that he had been acquainted with Winston Scott, at the time the C.I.A.'s Mexico City station chief, and that he had asked Mr. Scott for "anything that they could get for me or help me with."

He declined to say whether the agency had supplied him with any of the material concerning Miss Bunke.

Perhaps in part because of the C.I.A.'s portrayal of Tania, the dead woman has become a hero of the revolutionary left around the world. Her alias was adopted by Patricia Hearst, the San Francisco heiress, after she was kidnapped in 1974 by the Symbionese Liberation Army and announced that she had decided to join the group.

Reminded of that, the C.I.A. official chuckled. "Domestic fallout," he said.

Next: The C.I.A.'s Propaganda Network.

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