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THE DANILOFF CASE

# Spies and journalists often fish the same waters

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**T**oward the end of the Vietnam War, just weeks before Saigon fell to the North Vietnamese, the Saigon station chief for the Central Intelligence Agency telephoned correspondents of major American news organizations several times a day.

Washington was breathing down his neck, and many of his operatives were gone. Had they heard anything new?

Correspondents recall they gave the agent, Thomas Polgar, what they had, some reluctantly but others willingly. During the previous months and years, Polgar had been helpful to them. He had been, in fact, one of their best American sources, a man who, unlike certain Foreign Service officers, had no apparent ax to grind. In the Vietnamese jungle of political disinformation, he spoke, by and large, dispassionately.

Were those reporters working, albeit temporarily, for the CIA? Were they compromising themselves professionally?

"Any foreign correspondent who is overseas for any length of time who doesn't have some CIA contacts is not doing his job," said Keyes Beech, a retired, Pulitzer Prize-winning correspondent who spent three decades in Asia for the Chicago Daily News. "They are in the business of gathering information, and so are we. And you don't get it if you don't give."

The complex question of relations between correspondents and American intelligence officers has been raised anew by the Soviet charges of espionage against Nicholas Daniloff, Moscow correspondent for US News and World Report.

Soviet watchers, especially those who know Daniloff, are virtually unanimous in their belief that he has been framed by the KGB, angry over the arrest on spying charges of one of its officers in New York.

Yet there has been a rich history of relations between the CIA and American

correspondents, especially in the two decades immediately after World War II. Several dozen reporters are documented to have been on the CIA payroll, and scores of others to have provided occasional services, both journalistic and otherwise, free of charge.

Joseph Alsop, the syndicated columnist who is now retired, said he did several favors for the CIA, including taking a trip to Laos in 1952 and one to the Philippines in 1953. In both cases, the CIA felt his coverage would affect the political situation, and he complied. On other occasions, he said, he has done small non-journalistic favors, but declined to elaborate.

"I have the utmost contempt for any colleague who refuses to help out his government when asked to do so, as long as he doesn't accept money," Alsop said. "Is it wicked to behave as a patriot nowadays?"

According to CIA files made public under the Freedom of Information Act several years ago, journalists acted as sources of foreign intelligence, provided cover, offered material for use by the CIA and collaborated in or worked on CIA-produced articles for placement in foreign newspapers. Others assessed or recruited potential sources or provided access to people in whom the CIA was interested.

A number of major news organizations, including The New York Times, Newsweek magazine, the Christian Science Monitor, CBS, ABC and the Associated Press, cooperated with the CIA in various ways at one time, according to published reports and interviews with those involved.

"During my operational days, I used to run my people as journalists," said William Colby, CIA director from 1973 to 1976. "Most other countries, including democratic ones, have no compunction against using journalists for intelligence. During the 1950s and '60s, American journalists felt much freer to work with the CIA. It was only in the 1970s that people started getting hysterical about such contact. The CIA needed journalists to get at people and places we couldn't. One of our biggest problems is cover. I think it's time we all pulled our socks up and put this thing in perspective."

Daniel Schorr, longtime correspondent for CBS and now a commentator for Na-

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tional Public Radio in Washington, agreed that things have changed since the 1950s. He said the era of the Cold War, when it was widely perceived that national security was keenly threatened, produced a very particular mood.

"There was a whole different ethic in those days," he said. "When Khrushchev came to the UN, CBS gave permission to have a CIA guy in our booth so he could try to lip-read the private conversations."

Harrison Salisbury, who covered Moscow for The New York Times throughout the difficult Stalin years, said his confidential memos to his editors ended up in the hands of the CIA. He is convinced his editors gave them directly to the CIA, which, he said, maintained in those years a New York agent who was on close terms with New York Times editors.

During the 1970s, the Watergate scandal and the Vietnam War helped produce a new political culture. A generation of reporters brought up on an adversarial relationship with their government exposed and criticized the relationship between the CIA and the media.

Congressional hearings on the work of the CIA were held, and news organizations engaged in a period of self-searching. In 1977, investigative reporter Carl Bernstein wrote a landmark article for Rolling Stone magazine alleging that, according to CIA sources and files, more than 400 American journalists had secretly carried out assignments for the CIA over the previous 25 years.

Three months later, The New York Times produced a three-part series saying it had been able to identify 70 such cases. Among them numbered at least one of its own previous full-time and one past part-time reporter.

During that period, organizations such as the Overseas Press Club and the American Society of Newspaper Editors condemned the use of journalists by the CIA and called for a stop to it. Congress held hearings with the aim of legislating curbs on the CIA. A key witness during the hearings was Daniloff, who supported such legislation.

Moreover, the CIA itself was getting skittish about such close relations with a mistrustful press and decided to restrict contacts. It issued internal regulations forbidding itself from entering into any relationship with journalists accredited to a US news organization for the purpose of conducting intelligence activities.

Although there is every reason to believe the rules have been respected, there are two rarely-mentioned loopholes: Voluntary work by journalists is allowed, and restrictions on hiring can be overcome with the permission of the CIA director.

Few analysts believe that relations between the CIA and the media will return to the level of the 1950s. David K. Smpier, who has served for The New York Times in Saigon, Moscow and Jerusalem, said he views CIA agents like anyone else: sources of information, but nothing more. He recently turned down a request that he lecture CIA agents on the Soviet Union.

"The last years have led to a clearer sense among both journalists and the CIA that there is little to be gained from a relationship that could be misunderstood," said Peter Osnos, former foreign correspondent for The Washington Post.

But some reporters and intelligence officers overseas continue to meet at cocktail parties and to play tennis together, and there is little way of predicting what could bring about another swing. The tenor of political debate has shifted to the right since the 1970s, and those who urge greater cooperation between the two communities feel encouraged.

Admiral Stansfield Turner, former CIA director, said: "The whole trend in our society against government, military and the intelligence field is changing. At Yale, 144 students applied for 18 slots in a seminar I'm giving. This at a campus where [former Defense Secretary Robert] McNamara wasn't allowed to speak. Things are changing."