

GOVERNMENT BOOK CONTROL

How the U.S.I.A. and the C.I.A. use private publishers
to influence public opinion.

By Geoffrey Wolff

"Words are loaded pistols," says Sartre, and official voices in this country have come to fully acknowledge this dictum. In the months before the 1964 election, for example, 18 of our 50 Senators were working on one or more books, most of which would be ghost-written and published under their names. The publish or perish syndrome is even more prevalent in the executive branch: we have had platoons of books and non-books about the Peace Corps, introduced by Sargent Shriver; the Defense Department has been endlessly chronicled, as have NASA, the diplomatic corps, the Internal Revenue Service, and the rest of the Establishment's interests. A story often heard in Washington has President Kennedy looking ahead to the 1964 election and huddling with his lieutenants to come up with a campaign issue. In one of the meetings, the story goes, he asked if there was anything of substance in Michael Harrington's study of poverty, *The Other America*. Assured that there was, Kennedy called for memorandums, documents, and ideas. Shortly thereafter, poverty books came forth by the dozens—many written by persons who were part of or close to the Administration. Magazine articles followed; silence and ignorance gave way to public clamor; an issue was born, and the War on Poverty began.

In principle, there is nothing alarming about public officials generating books to further their political ideals and careers. In practice, however, political expediency has made many writers so arrogant that they scorn facts and ignore their duty to learn and the reader's right to know. There is much evidence that books are used increasingly as engines of propaganda, that highly-placed persons are pre-censoring books they find repellent or embarrassing, and that they are commissioning and controlling the writing of books without disclosing the facts of such control. If we believe that truth has a more exclusive claim to our attention than partial truth or falsehood, and if we believe that openness and disclosure of the circumstances surrounding the writing, publishing, and marketing of a book are requisites of a free access to ideas, then we must be alarmed at the sham, illegality, and indirection that have infected much of what is sold as objective reality.

Recently, for example, Mr. George Carver wrote for the highly respected periodical *Foreign Affairs* an article supporting our official policy toward North and South Viet Nam. Mr. Carver is with the C. I. A. but this crucial information was not related by *Foreign Affairs*. Worse, it is possible it was not given to the magazine. It is illegal for the C. I. A. to operate as an intelligence-gathering or intelligence-disseminating organization in the United States. The same restrictions apply to U. S. I. A., which is bound to confine itself to propaganda activities abroad. Yet its officers admitted several months ago in hearings before a sub-

committee of the House Committee on Appropriations that part of the activity of its "Book Development Program" has been the *secret* production of manuscripts, published by private companies which the U. S. I. A. subsidizes, and sold in this country without any government imprimatur or other acknowledgment of the circumstances of their origin.

Reed Harris, appearing before the subcommittee in his capacity as director of the U. S. I. A. Information Center Service, said of these books: "We control the things from the very idea down to the final edited manuscript." Perhaps the books are accurate and valuable, perhaps they are self-serving or meretricious; what is certain is that they do not tell the reader what he surely wants to know: that they are works which the U. S. I. A. admits would never have been written without Government support and would not have been released by a commercial publishing house without subsidization—either because they were unworthy of publication or they were unmarketable.

Leonard Marks, director of U. S. I. A., and Ben Posner, assistant director, were questioned about the Book Development Program by Congressman Glenard Lipscomb (R.-Cal.). Portions of the exchange follow:

Mr. Lipscomb: What were the books that were developed in the 1966 [sic] fiscal year Book Development Program?

Mr. Posner: In fiscal year 1965 there were four books that were developed. *The Ladder Dictionary* by John R. Shaw, *The Sword and the Plow* by Ralph Slater, *President Kennedy in Africa* by Robert Marshall, *The Truth About the Dominican Republic* by Jay Mallin . . . We will be pleased to make this information available to the committee. Because it has not been our policy to make our support known in connection with these items, the material that I have is not for the record, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Lipscomb: Do I understand that this list is considered as classified?

Mr. Posner: In the sense that we have not in the past divulged the Government's connection with it, yes sir.

Mr. Lipscomb: Are any of these books on this classified list distributed and sold within the United States?

Mr. Posner: I believe that they are; yes.

Mr. Marks: In other words, we assist.

At this juncture Mr. Marks agreed to put in the record the titles of the books and the cost, \$90,258, of commissioning manuscripts and supporting the publication of books commissioned by private publishers. The taxpayer who buys one of these books pays for it three times: he pays to have it written; he pays to

Printing Office which could publish and sell the book at a fraction of the cost. Approved For Release 2003/11/04 : CIA-RDP69B00369R000200240105-2

Mr. Lipscomb: Why is it wrong to let the American people know when they buy and read the book that it was developed under Government sponsorship?

Mr. Marks: It minimizes their [sic] value.

Mr. Lipscomb: Why is it not a good policy to maintain the same ground rules that you maintain with motion pictures, with newspaper stories, and do your work just for overseas and make it a policy that these books that are prepared under your supervision and prepared with taxpayers' money are not for distribution within the United States?

Mr. Marks: . . . Where an audience overseas reads a book with the label of the U. S. Government they look upon it in a particular manner. Where they read a book that is published in the United States and we distribute it, they look upon it differently, as the expression of the author. It is the expression of the author, it is not our expression. We did not write that book. We merely bought copies and helped to distribute it. But if we say this is our book, then the author is a Government employee, in effect.

Of course the author is a Government employee—in fact, not in effect. He does a chore at the order and to the requirements of the Government. Further, his work is then published under the copyright of a private publisher even though Section 8 of the Copyright Laws says that any work produced by a Government employee within the scope of his employment is not copyrightable, even though produced by a private publisher. Thus the taxpayer pays again: he pays royalties on each copy of a book that the U. S. I. A. buys for distribution—a book which is already their property. Mr. Lipscomb was very gentle with Mr. Marks on this point:

Mr. Lipscomb: I am for the Book Development Program for distribution overseas. I believe you can do lots of good with it. But why not limit your activities for overseas? You are making a subsidy to the author and publisher. The taxpayer is not complaining about it, but there is a principle involved in my mind that when an American citizen who subsidizes a book reads it, he should know.

Mr. Marks: That is a point of view which I understand.

Mr. Lipscomb: I assume you are distributing them overseas, for lack of a better word, for propaganda purposes.

Mr. Marks: Yes, definitely; to tell a story.

Mr. Lipscomb: Is it being sold in the United States for propaganda purposes?

Mr. Marks: No.

In other words, what is meant to manipulate a foreign reader is believed by Mr. Marks to be a fair and objective account to an American reader. But the truth is that a student writing a paper about our intervention in the Dominican Republic has before him in Mallin's account of *The Truth About the Dominican Republic* a controlled package which is not truly labeled. If he is misled before he gets past the dust jacket and title page, what can he expect of the book itself? The C. I. A. also has had for years a great respect for the power of books to influence opinion.

the names of Frederick A. Praeger and the M. I. T. Press (The Center for International Studies at M. I. T. ago) are only two of many that crop up again and again in the company of the U. S. I. A. and the C. I. A. One welcomes the written views of men connected with such agencies as well as those of scholars working without such support, but the taxpayer has the right to know what he is paying for and the reader has the right to know the basic beliefs and qualifications and sources of the man whose book he buys.

And the evil is compounded by the fact that the reader is often guided to a book by the good reputation of its publisher. Praeger, who is one of the chief contractors of books purchased by U. S. I. A., and whose company was recently purchased by the Encyclopaedia Britannica (think of the potential there!), is no Government stooge. Praeger books on politics, foreign affairs, and history have an excellent reputation for accuracy and timeliness. But we have no way of knowing which Praeger books were supported by the Government. For example, Praeger is the publisher for Bernard Fall, whose books about Viet Nam are indictments of Administration policy. Praeger also published Philip Geyelin's *Lyndon B. Johnson and the World*, an objective study of the President's foreign policy that was not purchased by U. S. I. A. for foreign distribution because it did not answer the Agency's propaganda needs. But Praeger is also named as the publisher of five* of the 16 titles U. S. I. A. supported or generated in 1965.

The Agency also spends \$6 million or so every year to buy books for distribution (Continued on page 15)

(in 1965 it purchased 175,032, representing 1,500 titles), and no one knows what effects the lure of this amount of money has on a publisher's agreement with an author concerning a book's tone and direction. Lipscomb and Marks touched on this question after it had been revealed that a substantial number of these books were ordered from Potomac Books, Inc., a Washington publishing company. The Agency agreed to pay \$25,000 for six volumes on America, three of which had yet to be written and which would be distributed here and abroad without mention of the U.S.I.A. contract. Mr. Marks was asked about the agreement:

Mr. Marks: That is right, we bought a substantial number of books from that publisher but we did not write the books.

Mr. Lipscomb: You hired the manuscripts done?

Mr. Marks: We worked with them. I would not say we hired them. We did not contract for them. We said, "If this book is written on this subject, we are a cus-

*The *Sword and the Plow* by Ralph P. Slater, *The Dragon's Embrace* by Joseph Hevi, *The Communist Front as a Weapon of Political Warfare* by J. E. Atkinson, *In Pursuit of World Order* by Richard N. Gardner, *From Colonialism to Communism* by Hoang Van Chi.

tomers for you, and will buy X copies."

The case of William Manchester vs. The Kennedy Family has brought to public view an arrangement whereby sources of information for the book attempted to exercise complete control over the book's content, tone, and publication date. Manchester has been accused of foolishness in entering into such a contract, and the Kennedy family has been accused of misunderstanding the ground rules by which history gets written. On the contrary, what Manchester agreed to do has become common practice among historians and biographers and the Kennedys simply made the arrangement public.

A typical case of book-control works this way: a Government agency keeps information essential to the writing of a given book under a security classification. The agency then contacts a writer and agrees to lift the classification in exchange for the right to edit the entire book—not just the portions that touch on the previously classified material. Whether such censorship is in the interest of national security or in the interest of political expediency is a moot question: the effect of such an agreement is to grant enormous leverage to the Establishment, whose editorial judgments are neither disclosed nor subject to review.

When one considers the tens of millions of dollars spent by the Government on books, the economic leverage that results must be enormous. Books by, about, and for the Government claim a massive share of the book-selling and writing business and any publisher who flaunts the power structure does so at his peril. Recently, a freelance writer, Ralph Schoenstein, revealed that a book he wrote in 1965 about President Johnson and his three dogs, Blanco, Her, and the late Him, was submitted by his publisher, Doubleday, for review by Elizabeth Carpenter, Mrs. Johnson's press secretary. Mrs. Carpenter was furious: she fancied the 65-page manuscript to be repellent to the dignity of the President's high office and made it clear that for Doubleday to print the book would be to sacrifice the cooperation of the White House with its future writers. It never appeared.

We should not lament the loss of the doggy book were it not that such *sub rosa* censorship sets extremely dangerous precedents. The writing of a book and the reading of one are private enterprises that constitute a crucial defense against the tyranny of the majority. The cornerstone of such a defense is the frank disclosure of the manner in which the book came to be written or controlled. John Milton, arguing in the 17th century against the Licensing Act, wrote in *Arcopagitica*:

I deny not but that it is of the greatest concernment in the Church and to the Commonwealth to have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves, as well as men; and thereafter to confine, imprison, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors. . . . And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills reason itself, kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye.

It is not Government money or Government interest itself that sullies books. All one wants is that Government acknowledge its involvement and keep its hands off the writer's work. To ask this is to ask for no more than the Government demands of charitable foundations. But now there is a double activity, the secret suppression and creation of history, which reinforces the fears of American writers that their Government cannot be trusted and that it is not mature or brave enough to subsidize the open dissemination of ideas.