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# Shop Talk at Thirty

By Robert U. Brown

## Pressure on CIA

Pressure by American news organizations has forced a commitment from the Central Intelligence Administration that it will no longer employ American and foreign journalists working for American news media although it is dragging its feet in doing so. Perhaps further pressure can bring the same assurance CIA will not employ journalists working for foreign news media, which so far it has declined to do.

The board of directors of the American Society of Newspaper Editors at its meeting in Honolulu the week before Thanksgiving adopted a resolution calling on CIA "to give assurance that it has completed the termination of CIA employment of all correspondents of U.S. news media. In addition, the ASNE board calls on the President and Congress to require the CIA to extend this hands-off rule world-wide so as to prohibit CIA employment of journalists working for foreign news media as well as for American media."

The resolution noted the order by CIA Director George Bush, February 11, 1976, directing CIA not to enter any future contractual relationship with any full-time or part-time correspondents of American news media. It also noted assurance by Bush on June 24 to the National News Council that the directive included stringers, foreign nationals and freelancers working for American news media.

"However," the resolution continued, "CIA spokesmen said it would take time to phase out all past arrangements with such people in an orderly manner. The ASNE is now told they were talking in terms of completing terminations by the end of this year. This suggests the agency has not completed the severances nine months after they were ordered. We ask that the CIA Director report compliance with his directive of last February promptly and publicly."

"We further ask that the President by executive order, or Congress and the President by joint resolution, prohibit the CIA from employing newsmen of any nation."

About the time the ASNE resolution was adopted, on November 19 four representatives of the National Conference of Editorial Writers were meeting with two CIA executives at the Langley, Va., headquarters to discuss the same matter.

NCEW was represented by its president, John J. Zakarian of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, president-elect Clarke

Loory of the *Chicago Sun-Times*. Representing CIA were Andrew Falkiewicz, assistant to the director, and "a senior CIA official who asked not to be identified."

The NCEW memorandum to members on this meeting reports:

"1. The CIA has terminated relationships with American and foreign journalists working for American news media, although some past relationships still may be the process of being phased out. The latter would not be performing intelligence tasks, even if they still were being paid.

"2. Journalists in this classification—American or foreign journalists working for American news media—had only been involved in intelligence-gathering, not in planting information.

"3. A CIA-financed news service abroad is not considered an American news organization.

"4. The CIA rejects the NCEW contention that the CIA should not have relationships with foreign or American journalists in foreign news organizations. The officials said the CIA is in the foreign intelligence business to gather intelligence under the law, and that 'any foreigner is of interest to us, anyone, businessman, whatever, so we don't want to be cut off from anyone including journalists.'"

NCEW elicited the comment from CIA that the February directive "was highly unusual—one of only two or three such publicly announced directives in the agency's history—and that while it could be rescinded secretly, the agency's credibility would be damaged were it to do so and that fact came to light later. Therefore, they said, there would have to be a public statement if a decision to rescind were made."

Expressing agreement with a statement Secretary Kissinger made to the annual NCEW meeting—"I disagree with the practice of putting misleading information into foreign newspapers"—CIA officials insisted they wanted to retain the option of using "disinformation" when necessary but would discuss with Director Bush that possibility of formalizing Kissinger's statement as CIA policy.

CIA officials said the level of this practice of "disinformation" has fallen to almost nothing and is no longer a problem. They also minimized the impact of "fallout"—the verbatim reprinting or reporting elsewhere of CIA plantings

tem for the U.S. and the reasons why CIA, as we once said, should keep its cotton-pickin' hands off media and their representatives here and abroad:

"At the UNESCO conference in Nairobi, American delegates urged all nations to respect humanity's right to news uncontrolled by governments for their own ends. Those words lack force so long as an agency of the American government refuses to give assurance that it will forego employment of foreign newsmen for its own ends.

"The CIA has refused to give the world's people that assurance. We believe the American people through their elected representatives should require it to do so. The interests of the United States are not served if a U.S. agency reserves the right to interfere with other people's sources of information. To extend America's own respect for a free and independent press to the efforts of news media abroad would serve the higher purposes of the U.S., and stand in telling contrast to the practices of totalitarian systems which Americans expect their government to reject, not emulate."

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