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 Journalists ✓

# Reporters and the CIA

They keep in touch—but at arm's length



JOHN PHILBY

A tame courtship compared with the KGB's game: Philby

**E**xactly what are the relations between American reporters and the CIA? Although U.S. officials confirm that Nicholas Daniloff had no intelligence ties whatsoever, his ordeal has churned up that sensitive question—and the answer isn't always simple. Clearly, there is no comparing the KGB's systematic use of journalists as full-time spies and the CIA's occasional, informal cultivation of newsmen. Moscow is also the place where reporters are *least* likely to knowingly contact CIA agents, precisely because of the danger of getting framed. Elsewhere, however, U.S. correspondents have traded tips with intelligence sources. While those exchanges have become more guarded since the anti-CIA backlash of the 1970s, America's "spooks" and "hacks" still find ways to keep in touch while staying at arm's length.

By the KGB's standards, the CIA's courtship of journalists has never been very ardent. Stanislav Levchenko, a former KGB officer who defected to the West in 1979, estimates that at least half of

Soviet reporters are paid intelligence agents. Philip Knightley, a British writer who has done extensive research on the KGB—particularly on its notorious "turning" of British official Kim Philby—says *all* Soviet newsmen are required to pass on information. Often, the size and perks of the Soviet press corps are clues to their real function. In Beirut in the late 1960s the Tass bureau rarely produced articles and its correspondents almost never attended briefings or covered breaking news. But the bureau had six staffers (compared with three for United Press International) and the Tass bureau chief drove a new Citroën DS 21.

**'Symbiotic relationship':** While it has never engaged in that kind of exploitation, until a decade ago the CIA did cut deals with reporters. And at the time, both parties were quite receptive to those arrangements.

**David Atlee Phillips,** a former CIA agent who worked under journalistic cover in Chile, says he knows of only a few other reporters who actually joined the agency. "In 98 per-

cent of the cases," he says, "it was a symbiotic relationship." Occasionally older reporters, some of whom had served in World War II or Korea, passed on tips out of a sense of patriotic duty. Columnist Joseph Alsop once captured that sentiment, saying he had helped the CIA from time to time and was "proud to have done it." Other reporters simply regarded intelligence agents as more informed and reliable than other U.S. officials. Just before the fall of Saigon, for instance, U.S. Embassy officers were telling newsmen that the North Vietnamese had no chance of taking the city—while the spies were advising them to pack their bags and evacuate their families.

For its part, the agency once found journalists useful for a variety of purposes. It asked some to carry out "drops," just like case officers. Mostly it traded for information and access—sometimes with cash, sometimes with other information. As former CIA Director William Colby puts it: "What we used them for was to get to places

and people others couldn't get access to, without using the CIA flag." The only thing the agency didn't ask its journalistic contacts to do was report disinformation. "The rule we had," says Colby, "was that you didn't say anything about what they should write to their home editors."

The rules began to change, however, in the mid-1970s. Ex-CIA agent Philip Agee published a book naming scores of intelligence officers under embassy cover. Suddenly spies around the world stopped returning reporters' phone calls. Congress also began to pressure the CIA to clean up its abuses. In 1976 the Senate intelligence committee released a report disclosing that the agency had covert relations with about 50 journalists or employees of U.S. publications. It didn't name names. The New York Times subsequently published a story identifying several reporters and the organizations they worked for.

**'Life or death' exception:** Later that year George Bush, then head of the CIA, issued a regulation barring any direct ties between the agency and American news organizations. When Adm. Stansfield Turner replaced Bush in 1977, he distributed a one-page memo restating that position and adding one caveat empowering the director to make exceptions in what he considered "life or death" situations. Today, Langley officials refuse to discuss the ties-with-journalists issue. But privately sources confirm CIA Director William Casey has reaffirmed the Turner orders.

Since the crackdown both U.S. spies and journalists have become more cautious about their dealings. NEWSWEEK's Jerusalem bureau chief Milan J. Kubic reports that when he first arrived in Israel, he called the CIA station chief in Tel Aviv, whose name he had gotten from another journalist. The officer nervously denied any agency connection and hung up. Israeli intelligence sources also insist that for the last 10 years they haven't discovered any links between U.S. correspondents in Israel and the CIA. When London bureau chief Tony Clifton visits Washington, some CIA sources he knows from the Third World refuse to see him. If they hadn't already, many reporters have also adopted Clifton's rule for dealing with CIA officers:

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tell them only what you were already planning to print.

American correspondents in Moscow have become particularly circumspect. As recently as five years ago a group of reporters in the Soviet capital regularly played touch football against U.S. Embassy staffers, a game both sides jokingly referred to as "spiers vs. liars." Because of the risk of getting branded as CIA agents, the joke is now wearing thin. The journalists assume—as do their counterparts the world over—that some embassy officials are CIA officers and that some of their discussions with the embassy will be reported to Langley. But most correspondents avoid trying to figure out who the intelligence agents are. The embassy encourages this see-no-evil relationship, refusing to say anything about espionage cases. At a briefing last week in Moscow, an official even declined to talk about the CIA rule against ties with reporters. "We just don't comment on intelligence matters," the official said.

**Bugged offices:** Because the Soviets are perfectly capable of planting evidence to make Americans look like spies, Moscow correspondents are also on constant alert against setups. They assume that their offices, homes and cars are bugged. They carefully screen unfamiliar Soviets who ask for meetings to complain about lost

apartments, denied visas or relatives sent to the gulag. Since Daniloff's arrest, Moscow reporters have become even more vigilant. Some are agreeing to meet fewer Soviet strangers. Others see them only in their offices. Even with longtime acquaintances they are on guard. As Anna Christenson of UPI puts it, the Daniloff affair "adds a horrible edge of suspicion to a meeting. You're always thinking, 'Maybe the KGB got to them'."

To avoid more Daniloff cases, some U.S. reporters want Washington to press Moscow for stronger guarantees of press freedom. One possibility would be a strengthening of the 1975 Helsinki accords, which assure reporters of the right to travel between East and West and to work freely. "I can see the necessity," says The Washington Post's Gary Lee, "of the Soviets and the Americans having very specific rules on how to work [as a correspondent]." But Moscow reporters are also determined not to let Daniloff's framing intimidate them. As one of them puts it, "If we did that, we would all be writing about the 'Red October Potato Farm' and its new harvesters." American correspondents aren't about to start reporting disinformation instead of news—and that is what will always set them apart from the journalistic apparatchiks of the KGB.

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in Washington. STEVEN STRASSER in Moscow.  
TONY CLIFTON in London and MILAN J. KUBIC  
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# Reporters, spies have close ties

## Their 'affinity' breeds suspicion

By FRANK GREVE  
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WASHINGTON — While no evidence has been offered that U.S. News & World Report correspondent Nicholas Daniloff spied for the CIA in Moscow, it is not surprising that Soviet officials suspect American reporters of espionage.

Indeed, reporters and CIA agents historically have been so chummy that Joseph Fromm, then chief foreign editor for U.S. News, told a congressional committee in 1977 that "a foreign government could be forgiven for assuming that there is some kind of informal link."

Fromm's testimony came amid a series of embarrassing disclosures about the CIA's use of reporters as informants, conduits of disinformation, spies — and even spy masters. The disclosures produced reforms and a climate of mutual suspicion that shattered what Washington Post reporter Ward Just calls "the natural affinity between journalists and spies."

And yet, while reporters and CIA operatives are separated today by CIA regulations, they are not divorced. Though agency rules bar the actual hiring of accredited American journalists for covert missions, informal information-trading — what former CIA Director William Colby terms "mutual back-scratching" — still is encouraged.

"We'd be stupid to cut that off," Kathy Pherson, the CIA's media director, said last week. "Journalists have the same rights as any other American citizen."

In addition, CIA Director William Casey can declare exceptions to the reporter-hiring bar in "an emergency involving human lives or critical national interests." Former Director Stansfield Turner authorized three such exceptions involving Iran — between 1980.

### Editors 'naive'

Turner told a convention of newspaper editors in 1980 that they were "naive" to think any formal regulation could end alliances between reporters and the CIA. "I think a lot of correspondents are patriotic enough" to serve the CIA — perhaps without even informing their superiors, said Turner, adding he "would not hesitate" to approach them.

Many analysts believe Turner's remarks were intended to improve the cover available to CIA agents by forcing foreign counterintelligence agencies to include reporters as suspects.

Soviet officials hardly needed the encouragement. In the past 30 years, they have expelled 28 U.S. correspondents who, in that closed and suspicious society, must adopt the nosy and secretive habits of spies to do their jobs.

Last week, Daniloff said he may have triggered Soviet suspicions when he "worked energetically and probed deeply" to report on such subjects as Soviet military units in Afghanistan, nuclear waste dumps and the shooting down of Korean Airlines Flight 007.

Such topics involved "secret information," according to Foreign Ministry spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov.

Daniloff denied "any connection with any government agency" and Soviet allegations that he "acted on instructions" from two former U.S. Embassy diplomats identified by Soviet officials as CIA spies. But he did not address the question of whether the two men had been sources or acquaintances.

"It's a fair supposition that, in a community like Moscow, he might have made their acquaintance," ventured U.S. News senior editor James C. Kilpatrick. "Other former Moscow correspondents have told me they knew nearly everyone in the U.S. Embassy."

### No special relationship

He added that the magazine's policy is "that our correspondents should have no special relationship

of any kind with any intelligence agency. It's a no-no." Kilpatrick acknowledged that the policy does not rule out CIA personnel as sources: "The operant word is special."

Intelligence sources say, however, that Moscow long has been considered too risky for "deep cover" CIA operations, including those that might involve a reporter. Significantly, although exposés during the late 1970s named dozens of reporters and news organizations that had cooperated with the CIA for pay or patriotism, no Moscow-based American correspondent ever has been linked publicly to the agency.

Much of what is known about reporter-spy relations comes from an extraordinary series of House and Senate Intelligence Committee hearings held in 1977, plus the CIA's published regulations and a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit settled in 1982.

Together these sources establish that, through the mid-'70s, hundreds of American reporters worked hand-in-glove with the CIA, and dozens were employed by the agency.

A few, like the late columnist Joseph Alsop, admitted volunteering their services: "I've done things for them when I thought they were the right thing to do," Alsop said in 1977. "I call it doing my duty as a citizen." Others, like New York Times columnist C.L. Sulzberger, acknowledged helpfulness on a "totally informal" basis.

ABC correspondent Sam Jaffe said he had helped the agency — but denied reports that he had been paid to do so. CBS boss William Paley recalled meeting with top CIA officials to discuss opening a CBS News bureau abroad as a cover for an agency operative — but said he could not recall whether the network had done so.

Scores of reporters acknowledge that they were debriefed by the CIA after visits to Communist countries.

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## Didn't name names

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In 1982, the CIA described how it had used reporters, without naming names. The disclosure, in an affidavit, was part of the settlement of a Freedom of Information suit by Judith Miller, a former Progressive magazine reporter now working for The New York Times, that sought details of the agency's relationship with journalists.

"Some, perhaps a plurality, were simply sources of foreign intelligence; others provided cover or served as a funding mechanism" for agency activities, the affidavit said.

"Some provided nonattributable material for use by the CIA, collaborated in or worked on CIA-produced materials or were used for the placement of CIA-prepared material in the foreign media," it continued.

"Others assisted in nonmedia activities by spotting, assessing or recruiting potential sources or by handling other agents, and still others assisted by providing access to individuals of intelligence interest or by generating local support for U.S. policies and activities."

It concluded: "Finally, with respect to some of these individuals, the CIA simply provided informational assistance or requested assistance in suppressing a media item such as a news story."

The term "handling other agents" means directing and supporting spies, debriefing them, writing reports based on their findings and paying the agents, according to a guide published by the McLean, Va.-based Association of Former Intelligence Officers.

Besides using reporters, the CIA sometimes dispatched its own employees on intelligence missions abroad "who served as real or pretended journalists," according to testimony by Colby, the former CIA director, before the House Intelligence Committee in December 1977.

In a few cases, he said, American reporters were told by the CIA what to report in their dispatches.

Colby said photographers, drivers and other unaccredited personnel working for American news bureaus abroad — including some free-lance writers — were still considered fair game for agency employment (though more recent regulations require the prior consent of the news organization's top management).

## Recruiting foreigners

Colby also successfully opposed restrictions on recruitment of foreign reporters or exploiting foreign news media. "I believe that we should not disarm ourselves in this contest in the hopes that the rest of the world will be gentler," he said.

These days, reporters and CIA officials recoil when asked to discuss journalist-spy ties. In Moscow, for example, U.S. briefers won't even talk about the CIA rule against hiring reporters, saying, "We just don't comment on intelligence matters."

Clearly, however, contacts still are frequent between CIA personnel and American journalists abroad. "I consider, and most foreign correspondents consider, intelligence people good sources of information," Fromm, now a contributing editor to U.S. News, said Friday.

"I was just in Japan and Korea, and a New York Times correspondent was with me. He asked me who the CIA station chief in Seoul was, figuring he was probably the best source of information. There's nothing illegitimate about it," Fromm added, even though, in Soviet eyes, such contact might make the reporter seem to be "an unpaid spy."

The somewhat different point of view of a CIA station chief was argued in an affidavit contained in the Miller lawsuit.

The unnamed chief said an agent would approach a correspondent "because he's the guy who knows where all the skeletons are, what's the real story on so-and-so. They make an appointment. 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."

Fromm himself acknowledged the point in his December 1977 testimony before the House Intelligence Committee. "Obviously, the CIA's interest is to get information from a correspondent beyond that which he would report or have reported, because otherwise they could get it," he said.