The Depraved Spies and Moguls of the CIA's Operation MOCKINGBIRD

by Alex Constantine

Who Controls the Media?
Soulless corporations do, of course. Corporations with grinning, double-breasted executives, interlocking directorates, labor squabbles and flying capital. Dow. General Electric. Coca-Cola. Disney. Newspapers should have mastheads that mirror the world: The Westinghouse Evening Scimitar, The Atlantic-Richfield Intelligentser. It is beginning to dawn on a growing number of armchair ombudsmen that the public print reports news from a parallel universe - one that has never heard of politically-motivated assassinations, CIA-Mafia banking thefts, mind control, death squads or even federal agencies with secret budgets fattened by cocaine sales - a place overrun by lone gunmen, where the CIA and Mafia are usually on their best behavior. In this idyllic land, the most serious infraction an official can commit is the employment of a domestic servant with (shudder) no residency status.

This unlikely land of enchantment is the creation of MOCKINGBIRD.

It was conceived in the late 1940s, the most frigid period of the cold war, when the CIA began a systematic infiltration of the corporate media, a process that often included direct takeover of major news outlets.

In this period, the American intelligence services competed with communist activists abroad to influence European labor unions. With or without the cooperation of local governments, Frank Wisner, an undercover State Department official assigned to the Foreign Service, rounded up students abroad to enter the cold war underground of covert operations on behalf of his Office of Policy Coordination. Philip Graham, a graduate of the Army Intelligence School in Harrisburg, PA, then publisher of the Washington Post., was taken under Wisner's wing to direct the program code-named Operation MOCKINGBIRD.

"By the early 1950s," writes former Village Voice reporter Deborah Davis in Katharine the Great, "Wisner 'owned' respected members of the New York Times, Newsweek, CBS and other communications vehicles, plus stringers, four to six hundred in all, according to a former CIA analyst." The network was overseen by Allen Dulles, a templar for German and American corporations who wanted their points of view represented in the public print. Early MOCKINGBIRD influenced 25 newspapers and wire agencies consenting to act as organs of CIA propaganda. Many of these were already run by men with reactionary views, among them William Paley (CBS), C.D. Jackson (Fortune), Henry Luce (Time) and Arthur Hays Sulzberger (N.Y. Times).

Activists curious about the workings of MOCKINGBIRD have since been appalled to find in FOIA documents that agents boasting in CIA office memos of their pride in having placed "important assets" inside every major news publication in the country. It was not until 1982 that the Agency openly admitted that reporters on the CIA payroll have acted as case officers to agents in the field.

"World War III has begun," Henry's Luce's Life declared in March, 1947. "It is in the opening skirmish stage already." The issue featured an excerpt of a book by James Burnham, who called for the creation of an "American Empire," "world-dominating in political power, set up at least in part through coercion (probably including war, but certainly the threat of war) and in which one group of people ... would hold more than its equal share of power."

George Seldes, the famed anti-fascist media critic, drew down on Luce in 1947, explaining that "although avoiding typical Hitlerian phrases, the same doctrine of a superior people taking over the world and ruling it,
began to appear in the press, whereas the organs of Wall Street were much more honest in favoring a doctrine inevitably leading to war if it brought greater commercial markets under the American flag."

On the domestic front, an abiding relationship was struck between the CIA and William Paley, a wartime colonel and the founder of CBS. A firm believer in "all forms of propaganda" to foster loyalty to the Pentagon, Paley hired CIA agents to work undercover at the behest of his close friend, the busy grey eminence of the nation's media, Allen Dulles. Paley's designated go-between in his dealings with the CIA was Sig Mickelson, president of CBS News from 1954 to 1961.

The CIA's assimilation of old guard fascists was overseen by the Operations Coordination Board, directed by C.D. Jackson, formerly an executive of Time magazine and Eisenhower's Special Assistant for Cold War Strategy. In 1954 he was succeeded by Nelson Rockefeller, who quit a year later, disgusted at the administration's political infighting. Vice President Nixon succeeded Rockefeller as the key cold war strategist.

"Nixon," writes John Loftus, a former attorney for the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, took "a small boy's delight in the arcane tools of the intelligence craft - the hidden microphones, the 'black' propaganda." Nixon especially enjoyed his visit to a Virginia training camp to observe Nazis in the "special forces" drilling at covert operations.

One of the fugitives recruited by the American intelligence underground was heroin smuggler Hubert von Blücher, the son of a German ambassador. Hubert often bragged that that he was trained by the Abwehr, the German military intelligence division, while still a civilian in his twenties. He served in a recon unit of the German Army until forced out for medical reasons in 1944, according to his wartime records. He worked briefly as an assistant director for Berlin-Film on a movie entitled One Day ..., and finished out the war flying with the Luftwaffe, but not to engage the enemy - his mission was the smuggling of Nazi loot out of the country. His exploits were, in part, the subject of Sayer and Botting's Nazi Gold, an account of the knockover of the Reichsbank at the end of the war.

In 1948 he flew the coop to Argentina. Posing as a photographer named Huberto von Bleucher Corell, he immediately paid court to Eva Peron, presenting her with an invaluable Gobelin tapestry (a selection from the wealth of artifacts confiscated by the SS from Europe's Jews?). Hubert then met with Martin Bormann at the Hotel Plaza to deliver German marks worth $80 million. The loot financed the birth of the National Socialist Party in Argentina, among other forms of Nazi revival.

In 1951, Hubert migrated northward and took a job at the Color Corporation of America in Hollywood. He eked out a living writing scripts for the booming movie industry. His voice can be heard on a film set in the Amazon, produced by Walt Disney. Nine years later he returned to Buenos Aires, then Düsseldorf, West Germany, and established a firm that developed not movie scripts, but anti-chemical warfare agents for the government. At the Industrie Club in Düsseldorf in 1982, von Blücher boasted to journalists, "I am chief shareholder of Pan American Airways. I am the best friend of Howard Hughes. The Beach Hotel in Las Vegas is 45 percent financed by me. I am thus the biggest financier ever to appear in the Arabian Nights tales dreamed up by these people over their second bottle of brandy."

Not really. Two the biggest financiers to stumble from the drunken dreams of world-moving affluence were, in their time, Moses Annenberg, publisher of The Philadelphia Inquirer, and his son Walter, the CIA/mob-anchored publisher of the TV Guide. Like most American high-rollers, Annenberg lived a double life. Moses, his father, was a scion of the Capone mob. Both Moses and Walter were indicted in 1939 for tax evasions totalling many millions of dollars - the biggest case in the history of the Justice Department. Moses pled guilty and agreed to pay the government $8 million and settle $9 million in assorted tax claims, penalties and interest debts. Moses received a three-year sentence. He died in Lewisburg Penitentiary.

Walter Annenberg, the TV Guide magnate, was a lofty Republican. On the campaign trail in April, 1988, George Bush flew into Los Angeles to woo Reagan's kitchen cabinet. "This is the topping on the cake," Bush's regional campaign director told the Los Angeles Times. The Bush team met at Annenberg's plush Rancho Mirage estate at Sunnylands, California. It was at the Annenberg mansion that Nixon's cabinet was chosen, and the state's...
social and contributor registers built over a quarter-century of state political dominance by Ronald Reagan, whose acting career was launched by Operation MOCKINGBIRD.

The commercialization of television, coinciding with Reagan's recruitment by the Crusade for Freedom, a CIA front, presented the intelligence world with unprecedented potential for sowing propaganda and even prying in the age of Big Brother. George Orwell glimpsed the possibilities when he installed omniscient video surveillance technology in 1948, a novel rechristened 1984 for the first edition published in the U.S. by Harcourt, Brace. Operation Octopus, according to federal files, was in full swing by 1948, a surveillance program that turned any television set with tubes into a broadcast transmitter. Agents of Octopus could pick up audio and visual images with the equipment as far as 25 miles away.

Hale Boggs was investigating Operation Octopus at the time of his disappearance in the midst of the Watergate probe.

In 1952, at MCA, Actors' Guild president Ronald Reagan - a screen idol recruited by MOCKINGBIRD's Crusade for Freedom to raise funds for the resettlement of Nazis in the U.S., according to Loftus - signed a secret waiver of the conflict-of-interest rule with the mob-controlled studio, in effect granting it a labor monopoly on early television programming. In exchange, MCA made Reagan a part owner. Furthermore, historian C. Vann Woodward, writing in the New York Times, in 1987, reported that Reagan had "fed the names of suspect people in his organization to the FBI secretly and regularly enough to be assigned 'an informer's code number, T-10.' His FBI file indicates intense collaboration with producers to 'purge' the industry of subversives."

No one ever turned a suspicious eye on Walter Cronkite, a former intelligence officer and in the immediate postwar period UPI's Moscow correspondent. Cronkite was lured to CBS by Operation MOCKINGBIRD's Phil Graham, according to Deborah Davis.

Another television conglomerate, Cap Cities, rose like a horror-film simian from CIA and Mafia heroin operations. Among other organized-crime Republicans, Thomas Dewey and his neighbor Lowell Thomas threw in to launch the infamous Resorts International, the corporate front for Lansky's branch of the federally-sponsored mob family and the corporate precursor to Cap Cities. Another of the investors was James Crosby, a Cap Cities executive who donated $100,000 to Nixon's 1968 presidential campaign. This was the year that Resorts bought into Atlantic City casino interests. Police in New Jersey attempted, with no success, to spike the issuance of a gambling license to the company, citing Mafia ties.

In 1954, this same circle of investors, all Catholics, founded the broadcasting company notorious for overt propagandizing and general spookiness. The company's chief counsel was OSS veteran William Casey, who clung to his shares by concealing them in a blind trust even after he was appointed CIA director by Ronald Reagan in 1981.

"Black radio" was the phrase CIA critic David Wise coined in The Invisible Government to describe the agency's intertwining interests in the emergence of the transistor radio with the entrepreneurs who took to the airwaves. "Daily, East and West beam hundreds of propaganda broadcasts at each other in an unrelenting babble of competition for the minds of their listeners. The low-price transistor has given the hidden war a new importance," enthused one foreign correspondent.

A Hydra of private foundations sprang up to finance the propaganda push. One of them, Operations and Policy Research, Inc. (OPR), received hundreds of thousands of dollars from the CIA through private foundations and trusts. OPR research was the basis of a television series that aired in New York and Washington, D.C. in 1964, Of People and Politics, a "study" of the American political system in 21 weekly installments.

In Hollywood, the visual cortex of The Beast, the same CIA/Mafia combination that formed Cap Cities sank its claws into the film studios and labor unions. Johnny Rosselli was pulled out of the Army during the war by a criminal investigation of Chicago mobsters in the film industry. Rosselli, a CIA asset probably assassinated by the CIA, played sidekick to Harry Cohn, the Columbia Pictures mogul who visited Italy's Benito Mussolini in 1933, and upon his return to Hollywood remodeled his office after the dictator's. The only honest job Rosselli
ever had was assistant purchasing agent (and a secret investor) at Eagle Lion Productions, run by Bryan Foy, a former producer for 20th Century Fox. Rosselli, Capone's representative on the West Coast, passed a small fortune in mafia investments to Cohn. Bugsy Seigel pooled gambling investments with Billy Wilkerson, publisher of the Hollywood Reporter.

In the 1950s, outlays for global propaganda climbed to a full third of the CIA's covert operations budget. Some 3,000 salaried and contract CIA employees were eventually engaged in propaganda efforts. The cost of disinforming the world cost American taxpayers an estimated $265 million a year by 1978, a budget larger than the combined expenditures of Reuters, UPI and the AP news syndicates.

In 1977, the Copely News Service admitted that it worked closely with the intelligence services - in fact, 23 employees were full-time employees of the Agency. Most consumers of the corporate media were - and are - unaware of the effect that the salting of public opinion has on their own beliefs. A network anchorman in time of national crisis is an instrument of psychological warfare in the MOCKINGBIRD media. He is a creature from the national security sector's chamber of horrors. For this reason consumers of the corporate press have reason to examine their basic beliefs about government and life in the parallel universe of these United States.