"RUSSIA ACCUSES FLEET STREET"

Journalists and MI6 during the Cold War

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Abstract

An interesting but under-researched area of journalism studies is the relationship between foreign correspondents and the intelligence services during the Cold War. The aim of this paper to consider whether there is any evidence to back up specific allegations made in the Soviet era press in December 1968 that in the post-Second World War period named leading British journalists working for the national newspapers had a covert relationship with the British Secret Intelligence Service which involved their recruitment as agents and the use of intelligence-derived material in their article in the press. The paper raises questions about the methods of researching such alleged activities and the potential historical significance of the reporting of key Cold War events.

Keywords

Izvestiya; Cold War; MI6; intelligence; journalist agents; foreign correspondents

Background

On December 18 1968, the Soviet news agency, TASS, revealed to foreign correspondents in Moscow, including those from *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph* and Reuters, that the official newspaper of the Soviet Union, *Izvestiya,* and its weekly review, *Nedelya,* would publish documents detailing the "carefully masked connections" (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) between the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS – more commonly known as MI6) and a number of leading British journalists. *The Times* on December 20, under the headline "Russia accuses Fleet Street", reported that the aim was to demonstrate "the existence of sinister links between Fleet Street and the British secret service" and that Britain's free press was "a myth".

One journalist accused by Izvestiya of being an MI6 agent was Sunday Times correspondent, Henry Brandon, who wrote in The Times on December 20 1968 that the claims signified "a deterioration of Anglo-Soviet relations and a fading of the East West détente". The context was the conflict between the British government and the Soviet Union over the presence of their diplomatic representatives in each other's country, which eventually led in 1971 to Operation Foot and the expulsion of 105 Soviet officials from Britain (Andrew 2010:565; Hughes 2006). The Security Service (MI5) had warned Whitehall about the threat posed by the presence of the many KGB officers operating under 'light' diplomatic cover (Andrew 2010) but MI6 feared that expelling Soviet officials would create problems for its own officers operating under tighter restrictions out of the Moscow embassy (Hughes 2006).

With the freezing of relations between the two countries following the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, on September 27 1968, British Foreign Secretary, Michael Stewart, raised the issue of diplomatic presence with Prime Minister Harold Wilson, who agreed to keep numbers to current levels (PREM 1968). The Soviet government countered that this "unfriendly gesture" reflected "a general hostility" to the USSR (Andrew 2010:566); a view reinforced by the British announcement on December 11 that visas for diplomats would be denied until the Soviet embassy reduced its staff. Moscow responded on December 19, with an attack by *Pravda* on the "anti-Soviet campaign ... dictated by the millionaire proprietors of Fleet Street", who were "a syndicate of ideological gangsters". This provided the context for the *Izvestiya* article on MI6 and journalist-agents.

On December 22 *Nedelya* claimed that British foreign correspondents had been recruited as "agents" and "contacts" by MI6 and published a "Special Operational" list of journalist-agents ranked with regard to their "personal qualities", "professional possibilities", and "places of work". Each agent was "designated by a code symbol, alongside which was an identified MI6 officer, who was responsible for maintaining contact with the agent. Each agent is characterised in detail and how they might be used by the Service." *Nedelya* noted (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) that MI6 had "its people in newspapers with circulations of the millions, as well as in technical magazines dealing with construction and electronics. British intelligence agents nestle in both the *Sunday Times* and the shoddy *People*." The documents, which included some material on MI6's relationship with the BBC, were reproduced in February 1969 in the East German magazine, *Horizont*.**1**

The *Telegraph* reported on December 18 1968 that its own proprietor, Lord Hartwell (Michael Berry), managing editor, S. R. 'Roy' Pawley, and two correspondents were on the list. Pawley, who "felt flattered", issued a denial two days later to *The Times* and claimed his contact with intelligence had ended in 1945. The *Observer*'s editor, David Astor, wrote on the 22nd: 'It is hard to believe that Russians themselves take their own stories seriously. They should know that the only spy we have had working on the *Observer* – and that without our knowledge – was one of theirs – Kim Philby." Former senior MI6 officer Philby had been employed by the *Observer* as a 'stringer' when he defected to Moscow in 1963. One foreign correspondent named in the Russian article, Edward Crankshaw, dismissed it all as a "big joke"; whilst former *Economist* journalist, Brian Crozier, said it was "completely untrue". The *Guardian* reported on December 21 that the "absurd" story had "caused a great deal of amusement in Fleet Street and the Foreign Office", particularly "the reference to Lord Arran" of the *Daily Mail*. He was listed as agent "BIN-946" and was said to be in contact with MI6 officer, Count Frederick Venden Heuvel, code-named "Z-1". Arran had helped "BIN" in "the solution of operative problems that arise and furnishes general information on questions connected with newspapers" (Lyadov and Rozin 1969).

Dismissed by the British press as Soviet propaganda, the *Izvestiya* story soon disappeared from the papers. The BBC's Chief External Services Publicity Officer, anxious that the story might develop into a wider investigation, was able to report to senior officials in the BBC that newspapers had responded to the Arran claim with "cartoons and humorous comment". (BBC File) He was informed that the Chief

Editor at the *Daily Mirror*, Edward Pickering, thought the Soviet documents "profoundly uninteresting" and was "determined not to spend good money on stuff containing no possible story". When the Russians came back in the New Year with further accusations, the BBC External Services noted that "only one newspaper reported it" (BBC File).

The BBC External Services made efforts to obtain a set of the *Izvestiya* documents as they "might be useful one day" and approached its contact with the Foreign Office's propaganda unit, the Information Research Department, Mrs Josephine O'Connor Howe. She, however, thought it "wrong and inadvisable" as "any documents likely to implicate the corporation were already available to it". She was also "feeling some sympathy with IRD's friends" – i.e. MI6 – for the way its activities were being exposed. (BBC File) This was an indication that those documents dealing specifically with the BBC were regarded as genuine.

This had been a KGB propaganda exercise but, if we ignore the ideological rhetoric, was there any substance to the allegations? This paper analyses the *Izvestiya* list and its provenance. It scrutinises the relationship during the Cold War between MI6 and certain newspapers, traces the intelligence ties of individual journalists, and their reporting of key historical events. Were journalists active players in helping to shape and frame perceptions and debates of the Cold War? Robert Dover and Michael S. Goodman (2009:intro.) in *Spinning Intelligence* believe that

> This menage a trois of spooks, hacks and the public is worthy of serious attention, because it is a relationship of great dependencies,

synergies and feedback loops. Intelligence and the media - blood brothers separated at birth - operate within the realities established by the societies from which they spring. They can shape the nature and form of these societies.

Methodology

What has become apparent with the opening up of archives in Russia, Britain and the United States, is that many "factual" claims in Soviet Cold War publications often turn out to be accurate. Paul Maddrell (2005), in a study of the East German publisher, Julius Mader, claims that many of the propagandist's exposes of Western espionage in the 1950s and 1960s were "indeed true, and his works, though obviously products of an ideology, represent a valuable resource for the historians of today". Moreover, they were "telling us much that our own governments did not want us to hear" and that we "surely have a right to know what secret activities the Western governments undertook during" during the Cold War.

Much of our knowledge of the post-war Polish anti-communist underground network, The Freedom and Independence Movement (Wolnosc I Niepodleglosc – WIN), which was backed by the CIA and MI6, comes from Soviet documents published in 1952 which disclosed that WIN had been from the beginning a controlled KGB operation. Similarly, accounts of the CIA and MI6 exile operations in the Baltics in the late 1940s and early 1950s have largely been based on extensive accounts issued by Soviet propaganda outfits in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In both instances, confirmation of the Soviet versions came from CIA and MI6 officers. In referring to

the Soviet account of the guerrilla operations in Lithuania with which he was involved, Thomas Remeikis wrote that “It is reasonable to believe that the Soviet versions are correct as far as facts, dates, names and places are concerned”. (Grose 2000:197-9 CD of the Soviet Press 1952. Rositzke 1977:170-1. Remeikis 1962.)

The KGB released many “Facts Accuse” type propaganda booklets throughout the Eastern Bloc detailing covert activities by western intelligence agencies against rh Soviet regime. The Service had a long history of such propaganda and emphasised dezinformatsiya as a useful “Active Measure” (Covert Action) involving news agencies, sympathetic newspapers abroad, courted journalists and use of journalism as “cover”. (Bittman 1984; Shultz 1985: Andrew and Mitrokhin 199 & 2005.) But most of its efforts were unsophisticated. This author did uncover one of the few successful projects, the planting of disinformation on the Italian left-wing newspaper, *Paese Sera*, in 1967. (Dorril 1983; Holland 2006)

Following the escape and defection to Russia of the former British MI6 officers, Kim Philby and George Blake, the KGB was in the late 1960s engaged in a propaganda campaign concerning the nature of their activities, particularly against the Soviet Union. Some of the material was false, some of it was slanted and some was skewed in an effort to undermine relations between the UK and the United States (Kerr 1996). But the majority of it – Philby’s book for instance – turned out to be accurate. For *Izvestiya*, there was little need to create disinformation because the KGB held a treasure trove of intelligence material from Philby and Blake; the latter responsible in the late 1950s for recruiting journalist agents (Blake 1990). The MI6 documents cited by *Izvestiya* were dated "September 1959", which fits with Blake’s role in MI6 at that

time and with evidence cited below suggests that they almost certainly came from him. The identity of MI6 officers named in the documents were not known in 1968 and were only confirmed many years later. It is possible that the documents are forgeries but other Blake generated material has been shown to be accurate. In February 1970, the paper published documents, to which Blake provided commentary, on MI6's Y-Section bugging of foreign embassies in the fifties. An MI6 officer who served with Y-Section later confirmed that the article was correct "in virtually all details" (Davies 2004:245).

Because of the lack of intelligence records this is not an easy area to investigate, particularly since the archives have been, in Richard Aldrich's phrase (Aldrich 2001), "dry-cleaned". MI6 has never officially released any post-war documents to the National Archives and a trawl of the archive by the author and the BBC's 'Document' programme for information on the Soviet claims drew a blank**2**. The BBC's own file on the "Communist attacks on the BBC", which includes most of the Soviet generated articles on MI6 journalist-agents, has been weeded with redactions on names of certain government personnel. However, the deficiency in official information should not invalidate research in this area. M. L. R. Smith (1999) suggests that often, "the barrier to scholarly interpretation is purely a mental hurdle that has grown up in the minds of academics, fortified by three decades of established methods of thinking". Smith argues that the absence of official files becomes an excuse used to rationalise the failure to study problematic subjects. However, other sources of information can be used in a way compatible with academic research and since evidence is never complete, there is a requirement for academics to assess the available material.

By using a range of sources, including research on the history of MI6, newspaper archives and journalist memoirs, it is possible to test the *Izvestiya* allegations. Increasingly newspaper archives are being digitalised through websites such as ProQuest Historical Newspapers Digital Archive, which makes it much easier for a researcher to trace particular articles and, importantly, for this research, follow the work of particular journalists. In addition, increasing numbers of foreign newspapers are also being digitalised which helps track relevant stories. There remain problems since many newspapers have still to be digitalised and even when they are, they do not always go back far enough and are not always as paper archives. Newspapers in the past often printed a number of editions with variations in stories that appeared and cases entirely disappeared. The research has been helped by that fact that in recent years, a number of foreign correspondents have openly admitted that they had a secret relationship with MI6 and have described that relationship in some detail (Horne 2012.)

There has been journalist interest in this subject by British journalists (Knightley 2006; Leigh 2000; Keeble 2010) but until recently little in-depth investigation. The accounts have largely been anecdotal and not detailed. The exception to this has been with regard to the coverage of Northern Ireland in the mid-1970s by the British press. The revelations of senior information officer Colin Wallace concerning his role as an Army Information Officer involved with the propaganda unit, Information Policy, and his relationship with certain journalists covering The Troubles has given us the most detailed account to date of how journalists can be used by security and intelligence agencies using psychological warfare techniques such as “surfacing”. (Curtis 1984; Foot 1990)

Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2004:436) accepts that there is “irrefutable evidence of wide-scale, covert CIA penetration of the media in which journalistic collaboration ranged from “intelligence gathering to serving as go-betweens with spies”. The relationship between American journalists and the CIA has been scrutinised in more detail (Bernstein 1977; LOORY 1974; Johnson 1986). A series of articles in the *New York Times* in December 1977 revealed that the CIA had been helping to shape American foreign policy through its ownership of newspapers, news services and magazines abroad as “cover” organisations. The agency’s “propaganda assets inventory” included scores of journalists working as salaried operatives whilst employed by newspapers or news agencies, with many more who received no financial reward having a close relationship with the intelligence agency. A further twelve full-time CIA officers operated under journalist cover (Aronson 1990:315-7). James Aronson in his study of the press during the Cold War, believed that American journalists who co-operated with the CIA, did so out of “a myopic sense of team loyalty … which permitted them to discard a natural sense of scepticism about official pronouncements”. This “guided or misguided patriotism” had discarded the matter of ethics and the obligation “to expose all false and misleading information”. (Aronson 1990:317)

This whole subject, however, remains a sensitive subject for the British media. Eric Downton (1987:339), who admitted co-operating with MI6 whilst a *Telegraph* correspondent, claimed there was little "honesty in any of the histories of the two British newspapers having the closest links with the intelligence community, the *Daily Telegraph* and *The Times*". When the *Washington Post*'s Bernard Nossiter

(1978:188) wrote that he had "observed that some British foreign correspondents are interchangeable with agents - like Philby", he was "savaged" in *The Times* (December 22 1974) by its foreign editor, Louis Heren, for "putting a gun at the head of British reporters working abroad".

Whilst American journalists and former CIA officers have been relatively forthcoming in their willingness to to discuss their mutual relationship during the Cold War, British counterparts remain tight-lipped. There is a major difference in how they see their roles and their attitudes with regard to the requirements of secrecy and historical research. When the author asked a veteran *Guardian* foreign correspondent why he did not reveal that his “businessman” source for events in Iran in 1979 was a former senior MI6 officer (Desmond Harney), he was told that the British did not do that sort of thing. (Dorril 2000:744-5).

Paul Lashmar has detailed the institutional links and some of the ways British journalists collaborate – or collude – with official contacts in the intelligence services (Lashmar 2013). The former home affairs editor of *The Observer*, David Rose, who was the paper’s “accredited” intermediary with MI6, recalled that he was on the instructions of the MI6 contact to pretend that his meetings with him “never happened”. His attribution to a source was to be so vague that no one would realise he had talked to the Service. (Rose 2007) The penalty for breaching these conditions was to “expect instant darkness: the refusal of all future access”. In such a competitive newspaper market as the UK, failing to get the story has major consequences for the reporter concerned. In such a relationship, the delivering and the withholding of information puts the power in the hands of MI6, particularly since it is acknowledged

that the Service has been the most difficult one for media to engage with. MI6 says that it only deals with journalists who have a reputation for “discretion and professionalism” (Intelligence and Security Committee 2005: 31-2 & 81) but American journalists – used to citing CIA sources and often retired officers by name - have long complained about the habit of British newspapers to attribute information to vague sources such “a Whitehall source”.

MI6 and journalists

At the end of the Second World War, there had been a debate inside MI6 on how to gather intelligence inside the Soviet Union with some officers viewing journalists as ideal agents since they had "natural cover" (West 2009:120-130). They hoped the Soviets would become less suspicious of them as possible agents. The *Izvestiya* documents identified the MI6 sections co-ordinating journalist recruitment. The Controller Production Research (C/PR), official sources confirm, had been set up in 1948 to arrange "cover for an agent" with "a British firm or organization", and to seek assistance from UK citizens travelling to the Soviet Union (Bower 1995:159 & 184). It was responsible for the Z-network of journalist-agents, sympathetic newspaper proprietors and subsidised news agencies run by Count Vanden Heuvel (Jeffrey, 2010:379; West 1998:116). When Anthony Cavendish (1988) entered the Service in 1948, he discovered from Vanden Heuvel that "a number of MI6 agents were sent abroad as journalists. The Kemsley Press [owner of the *Sunday Times*] allowed many of its foreign correspondents to co-operate with MI6 and even took on MI6 operatives as foreign correspondents."

One such operative was wartime Army intelligence officer, Antony terry, who was provided with in the late 1940s with journalist “cover” on the *Sunday Times* when posted to Vienna where he was “run” directly by the MI6 head of station, George Kennedy Young. (Lenart 2007:45-50)

The *Sunday Times* Foreign News Service was managed by the former Naval Intelligence Department officer, Ian Fleming, who controlled a network of 80 foreign correspondents. He had enjoyed a relationship with MI6 since the 1930s when a Reuters correspondent in Moscow for the Metropolitan-Vickers trial. In 1951, he wrote to a former NID colleague that he was "engaged throughout the year in running a worldwide intelligence organisation and ... carry out a number of tasks on behalf of *a department of the Foreign Office*" [i.e. MI6] (West 2009:xxiv & xxv).

C/PR controlled the London Station (codenamed BIN) which organised anti-Soviet operations run from the UK (Davies 2004:191). *Izvestiya* (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) claimed a sub-unit, "BIN/CO-ORD" - headed by a veteran officer, Edward Boxshall - was involved in "the use of the British press". Its remit was confirmed by Nicholas Elliott (Bower 1995:184) - MI6's contact with Ian Fleming (West 2010:72) - who, in 1956, persuaded the *Observer* and the *Economist* to employ Philby as a journalist in the Middle East.

An alleged MI6 document cited by *Izvestiya*, "Contacts with British Governmental and Other Non-Intelligence Institutions and Organizations" (Lyadov and Rozin 1969), claimed "SPA/PROP" was responsible for "exercising political guidance over long-

term planning of all propaganda operations ... for whose conduct Her Majesty's Government must not be accused". The Special Political Action section, created in 1953 in the aftermath of Operation BOOT and the overthrow of Iranian Prime Minister Mussadegh, carried out "political measures", which included "the publication of newspapers and books" and the "operational" use of journalist-agents. (Davies 2004:227-8)

Journalist-Agents

George Blake (1990) revealed in his memoirs that in the late fifties, MI6, lacking sources inside the Soviet Union, transformed the Controller of Production into an "agent-running organisation", headed by Arthur Franks (BIN-51). As CP/R deputy, Blake (BIN01/A) recruited journalists as "Agents" or "contacts" and were provided with "cover", set information gathering targets, and paid via secret bank accounts. Former CIA Chief William Colby made a distinction between a "controlled agent" - whose loyalty was more to the agency than the newspaper - and a "contact" - who remained loyal to the newspaper: though this depended on the degree of influence exerted over the journalist (Johnson:1986). An alleged journalist-agent used by MI6 as a "potential source of information and operative data about the USSR" (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) was 'Henry Brandon' of the *Sunday Times*. His former editor, Harold Evans**3** dismissed claims that Brandon was an agent, though the paper's intelligence specialist, Philip Knightley**4**, accepted that he was an MI6 "asset". The distinction being that an agent has a long-term relationship with the Service which may involve a handler, who sets requirements and the payment of a regular salary or fee may be involved, whereas an asset is likely to be used on specific operations with any

payment being on an occasional basis. The latter included the journalist/author Norman Lewis, who had served with the Field Security Sections during the war and was employed post-war by the *Sunday Times*. According to his biographer, his reporting from Cuba at the time of the revolution was undertaken at the instigation of MI6's Tim Frenken, a member of the wartime Z Organisation. (Evans 2009:440-67).

A third category is the "stringer" – someone who uses the journalist tag as "cover" to gather information for the Service whilst carrying out occasional journalist duties. Lee Tracey was a MI6 operative who worked for the Daily Mirror during the fifties but filed few stories. He never met his MI6 controller and his link to the Service was through a senior police officer at Scotland Yard. (Interview 2013).

Oscar Brandeis moved to Britain in 1938 with the exiled Czechoslovak government and served as a war correspondent in North Africa and Europe with the *Sunday Times* and as its Chief American Correspondent until 1983. Colleague Godfrey Hodgson acknowledged**5** that Brandon was "well-equipped for social success in the Georgetown dinners where diplomats, journalists and intelligence officials mingled with … a carefully screened sprinkling of politicians ... [He] knew how to smelt the scrap of dinner-table gossip". He was close to Secretary of State, Henry Kissinger, who trusted the newspaperman to report fairly (Hersh 1982). However, on May 9 1969, with Richard Nixon in a rage over damaging leaks to the press about the secret bombing of Cambodia, the President's National Security advisor urged the FBI Director to tap the telephones of four journalists (FBI Files). J. Edgar Hoover was already suspicious of Brandon, who "had been tapped in previous administrations"

(Reeves 2002:86). He briefed Nixon (State Department, June 1974) that Kissinger visited the home of Brandon who "had connections with an allied foreign intelligence service".

Izvestiya claimed Michael Berry (codenamed "BIN-943"), the *Daily Telegraph*'s proprietor from 1954 and created a peer [Lord Hartwell] in 1968, was useful for "not only transmitting necessary information" but also for "winning support and sanction at a high level". An alleged MI6 document, "The Utilization of Employees of British Firms and Newspapers Abroad by British Intelligence", warned that "when actions are taken without the knowledge of the directors of newspaper in question, it is probable that valuable possibilities and intelligence information will be overlooked". Permission had to be sought from newspaper proprietors to use a journalist. On the *Telegraph*, Roy Pawley, whose "services and zeal" were highly valued by MI6, "has been entrusted with … the transmission of money to agents and arrangements of cover for other British intelligence agents such as former Reuter's correspondent, Tom Harris, in Sweden, Michael Field in Bangkok." (Lyadov and Rozin 1969). In the Second World War, Pawley worked in press censorship and post-war managed the *Telegraph*'s foreign news with direct access to the paper's proprietor (Lycett 1995:248; Faulks 1997:251 & 264). One *Telegraph* correspondent, the Canadian, Eric Downton, employed in the Naval Intelligence Division with Fleming during the war, acknowledged his own recruitment by MI6 and witnessed in Vienna colleagues, such as Gordon Shepherd, being used as information gathers by MI6's George Kennedy Young (Downton 1987:229 & 326-8).

Wartime MI6 officer, Malcolm Muggeridge admitted to fellow journalist Alan Watkins (1982) that he worked part-time for MI6 and helped his contact, Dick Brooman-White, provide journalist cover (Bright-Holmes 1981:339-43). In 1949, Intelligence Corps captain Dennis Bloodworth was vetted by MI6 for a journalist post in Paris with the *Observer*, after Muggeridge spoke to paper's editor, David Astor (Jenks 2001).

Muggeridge was "a valuable ally" to future historian Alistair Horne (2011:108), who had no qualms about his role as an MI6 agent whilst a journalist on the *Telegraph*. In 1946 he served under Maurice Oldfield in the Security Intelligence Middle East. When, in the early fifties, he joined the *Telegraph*, Oldfield - now a senior MI6 officer - provided briefings on the Soviet Union. He was posted to Berlin in 1953, after Pawley had been approached by Oldfield, who thought that since "as a journalist, you have perfect cover" he could handle German assets who were spying on their own government. Horne regarded the information he helped smuggle out as "helpfully complementary to what I was able to garner as a journalist" (Horne 2011:139-42).

Michael Field had been recruited by Philby to the wartime Government Code and Cypher School at Bletchley to analyse radio intercepts and was employed post-war as a stringer for *The Times*, covering a number of South American 'coups'. *The Times* obituarist (June 17 2003) noted that "Whether Field retained his Intelligence links during the rest of his career has not been revealed, but he certainly was present in many key areas of international tension." The *Press Gazette* (June 6 2003) pointed out that "much of what he knew went unpublished". In 1956, Field was posted by the *Telegraph* to Saigon and then Hanoi, where the MI6 station officer, Derek Davies**6**,

became editor of the Hong Kong-based *Far Eastern Economic Review* which he turned into "the window on Asia". Posted in 1962 to Bangkok, Field developed a close friendship with the Cambodian ruler, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, and published a government-backed magazine. That same year, MI6's specialist on South-East Asian affairs, Donald Lancaster**7**, was appointed secretary to Sihanouk. The year before, Lancaster had published *The Emancipation of French Indo-China*, praised by the Saigon government for "dealing with the contemporary history of Vietnam as a whole" (Truong-Buu-Lamm 1963). Field's 1965 memoir, *The Prevailing Wind*, argued against American policy in the region and was praised by the *Journal of Southeast Asian History* (1966) for understanding the context of "the resurgence of a united China determined to remove the Western presence from what is regarded as her legitimate sphere of influence". Field later covered Latin America and France, finally reporting on the Falklands War from Buenos Aires.

Izvestiya (Lyadov and Rozin 1969) claimed MI6 established a "good alliance" at the *Observer* with the Editor, David Astor, and journalists Mark Arnold-Forster and Soviet specialist Edward Crankshaw ("BIN 120"), who had been "used during his journey to the Soviet Union [and had] a very long record of such work". Crankshaw thought that either Philby or Blake were behind the article which was "a big joke". In *The Times* (December 20 1968) Astor called the report "nonsense" and Arnold-Forster described it as "rubbish".

Astor had been turned down by MI6 for a wartime post, though he was used to help establish contact with members of the German opposition with whom he had links. In 1944, he worked with a unit liaising between the Special Operations Executive (SOE)

and the resistance in France (Dorril 2000:456). In 1947, Astor**8** was appointed editor of *The Observer*, where he employed Terence Kilmartin, who had worked for the MI6-sponsored Arab radio station, Sharq Al-Adna (Boyd 2003), to run the *Observer*'s Foreign News Service (which later received subventions from the 'secret vote'**9**).

Mark Arnold-Forster's uncle, Christopher, was Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence during the war and served as MI6's Chief Staff Officer on its post-war Reorganisation Committee (West 1988:12). Mark commanded a flotilla of Motor Torpedo Boats (MTB) and, in 1946, joined the *Guardian* as its correspondent in Germany, where his "mentor" was [Sir] Charles Wheeler, commander of the Naval Intelligence Forward Intelligence Unit, which recruited naval officers as agents in the Soviet zone (Dorril 2000:112). Replaced by MI6's George Blake, Wheeler became the BBC's European External Service liaison officer in Berlin, where Arnold-Forster stuck out, Wheeler recalled in the *Independent* (October 23 2006), "because one had the feeling ... that the stories he was writing were not those others were chasing. He would go off to pursue a subject on his own." Wheeler admitted that he received intelligence on "cyclostyled sheets of information" about East Germany which he forwarded to the BBC's German Service. Colleagues accused him of being "a propagandist" but he denied the charge and claimed he only gave the Service information on one occasion (Nelson 1997).

In 1954 Arnold-Forster returned to MI6 to command a MTB operation infiltrating Latvian agents into the Caucasus. The exiles, however, had been infiltrated by the KGB and informed the Soviet authorities in advance of the mission.**10** He joined the *Observer* in 1957 specialising in German affairs and then the *Guardian* in 1963. A

close friend of Tony Benn, the British Labour Cabinet Minister's growing suspicion of Arnold-Forster's continuing intelligence ties is strikingly revealed in successive editions of his diaries (Benn 1987 & 1989).

Edward Crankshaw was of particular interest to the Soviets because "he is used to obtain intelligence information, and also to carry out other intelligence assignments". An alleged MI6 document, "The Moscow Correspondent of the *Observer*", detailed the preparations to send a new correspondent to the Soviet Union and the problems of selection and relations with the embassy (Lyadov and Rozin 1969). One *Observer* correspondent posted to Moscow was Mark Frankland (1999), an MI6 officer who had rejected the world of "boyish tricks and thuggery, stealth and deceit". His "mentor" at the *Observer*, Crankshaw, had before he left for Moscow in 1962, helped conceal the fact that he was homosexual - which during the Cold War left him open to blackmail - though Blake had already made the Russians aware of it.**10** Frankland denied being a journalist-agent for MI6, though he was, in 1985, singled out for expulsion in a tit-for-tat response to suspected Soviet spies being thrown out of London.

Crankshaw had wartime contacts with MI6 having served with the Y-Service as a signals intelligence officer. He was posted to Moscow and on recall to London in 1943 was assigned to Bletchley Park to deal with matters pertaining to Russia (HW50/11 & 61/37). In 1947, he became the *Observer*'s correspondent in Moscow, where he lived with the artist, T. S. Andriyevskaya, who, a year later, was accused of being a British spy, forced to confess, and sent to a labour camp; her ultimate fate unknown (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000:529-530). For twenty years, Crankshaw kept

watch on the Soviet Union. He was not, however, a simplistic cold war warrior; he had a genuine love of Russia - believing it had been corrupted by Stalinism - and disliked those "Kremlinologists" who viewed Soviet actions only in conspiritorial terms.

Following Stalin's death in 1953, the Foreign Office asked MI6 for help in interpreting events in the Soviet Union. This required more intelligence from Russia, but MI6 had few agents there and so asked the *Telegraph* to cooperate. It posted Eric Downton to Moscow and arranged a briefing by an MI6 officer who listed the information they were seeking. Pawley told Downton (1987:326-9 & 342-3) that Lord Camrose and Michael Berry had approved of his employment by MI6:

> I had known that many of my colleagues, especially those with wartime intelligence experience, kept in close touch with the British embassies' intelligence personnel in the areas of their assignments. But I had not realised how extensively and systematically MI6 utilized the British news media with the knowledge and co-operation of its senior executives and proprietors.

Downton's MI6 contact was Press Attache Hubert O'Bryan Tear, a former SOE officer who served post-war in Germany, training Ukraine exiles for anti-Soviet operations (West 2010:189). Through an "indiscretion" on Tear's part, Downton (1987:343) learnt that the *Sunday Times* representative in Moscow, Cyril Ray, had also done "the journalist-agent thing".

According to MI6's George Kennedy Young**11**, "after a series of informal supper parties with the brightest SIS officers, a systematic study was started of the top Soviet power structure, its various personalities and cliques, and their associates in the armed forces and the KGB." With the support of Blake, Nigel Clive**12** set up a group of Soviet experts, including Professor Leonard Schapiro, a wartime MI5 officer, whose book, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy* (1955), established him as 'a penetrating critic of the Soviet regime'. As head of Russian Studies at the London School of Economics, he enlisted Soviet studies experts for MI6 (Reddaway, 1984). "The results," claimed Young, "changed the whole emphasis in tackling Russian targets, produced expert briefings for potential sources and for the interrogation of deserters and defectors." The first fruit of Schapiro's work came in 1956 with the visit to Britain of Soviet ex-premier, Georgi Malenkov.

An article appeared in the *Daily Mail* on February 10 1956, prior to the 20th Communist Party Congress, written by another journalist-agent on the *Izvestiya* list, foreign editor Walter Farr (Lyadov and Rozin 1969). Based on "carefully checked information reaching London", Farr wrote that "the struggle between Khruschev [the new Soviet leader] and Malenkov is flaring again" with Congress delegates "split" over the way forward for Russia. In March, the *Observer*'s Moscow correspondent, John Rettie, was approached by a Russian contact, Kostya Orlov, whom he suspected worked for the KGB. Orlov told him about Khruschev's denunciation of the horrors of Stalin's rule at a secret session on February 25 at the Congress; details of which, Rettie**13** smuggled out to Reuters. Supplied with evidence of a split within the Soviet leadership, MI6, according to Robert Service**14**, "cooked up a scheme for the *Daily Mail* to publish a false report of an internal Kremlin coup against the post-Stalin

reformers". Schapiro's idea was to use Malenkov's British interpreter, the academic, Harold Shukman, "to tempt Malenkov to seek asylum in London rather than return to Moscow, where he could risk arrest".

On March 19 Farr wrote that "a sudden change of plan yesterday by Mr Malenkov is believed to be directly connected with political upheavals in the Kremlin". Malenkov had hurried back for talks with the Deputy Foreign Minister, Mr Gromyko, about the leakage of Khruschev's anti-Stalin speech at the Congress. "Western experts regard the speech and the timing of its leakage as striking evidence of growing ferment in the Kremlin. They believe, too, that Mr Khruschev may have gone too far in attacking Stalin." According to Shukman's son**15**, an MI6 officer gave his father a copy of a *Mail* front page, titled 'Four of Malenkov's men disappear in Moscow', which they wanted him to read out to Malenkov but he declined to be part of the skull-duggery and the planted story never appeared.

The full text of Khruschev's speech leaked out through Poland, whose communist party had received edited copies (Rettie 2006). Polish Communist journalist Victor Grayevsky**16** handed one to the Israeli Embassy, which forwarded it on April 13 to Israeli intelligence, which in turn transmitted the document to the CIA's James Angleton. Receiving his copy on the 17th, Angleton provided a version to the *New York Times* and – possibly - to Edward Crankshaw. On June 7, at an *Observer* editorial meeting, Crankshaw "modestly mentioned that he had obtained complete transcripts of Khruschev's speech". As Rettie notes (2006), "Exactly how he obtained it is not recorded." With Astor's support, the full 26,000 words were published in the paper on June 10.

It is often been stated that the contemporary activities of intelligence agencies, and British intelligence in particular, cannot be studied because by their nature, they are very secretive and there is no material for a study. However, this author has long argued that there is much more in the public domain than is realised and that intelligence agencies are heavily engaged with the press and, if not always visible, are active in the public arena. Although MI6 was officially tasked with political intelligence gathering it is clear that it also had a propaganda role much in line with Herman and Chomsky's five-filter model (1988).

Herman and Chomsky (1988) model claims that the media rely heavily on official sources from government/state agencies which are aggressive in promoting a favourable version of their activities. Such sources are "routine" in journalism but intelligence sources are too an extent, as Boyd-Barrett (2004:445) argues, a "departure" from the routine in that they are privileged because of the attached aura of secrecy which always sticks to such source material. Because of its uniqueness, journalists, editors and newspapers often depart from the standard practice of balancing one source against another or the attempt to secure additional verification from other sources. Too often there develops a cosy relationship between individual journalists and intelligence sources and there develops a controlled trade-off between support and access to information.

MI6 had significant involvement in "agenda setting" (Herman and Chomsky 1988) during the early stages of the Vietnam War. Through its journalist assets and the use of briefings and privileged access to information and specialists it set about "framing"

(Goffman 1986) how the debate took place on what was at stake. Drawing on the work of Richard C. Stanton (2007:193-4), it can be seen that the use of disguised intelligence sources, which were seen as “credible” by journalists, allowed MI6 to shape, define and “force all interpretation of issues and events into a narrow frame” . The audience was not only the British public but American officials and politicians who took a different line on the influence of the Soviet and Chinese communist governments in directing the war.

Edward Crankshaw was responsible for a series of ground breaking articles in the *Observer* on the Moscow meeting in November 1960 of world communist parties, which witnessed a serious deterioration in Chinese/Soviet relations, and led to an intense debate within Western intelligence about the reality of the split. "There has come into our hands, Crankshaw wrote in the *Observer* (February 12 & 19 1961), "a fully-documented report of the charges and counter charges between Peking and Moscow ... this report, which contains detailed summaries of hitherto secret correspondence, came from a satellite source." These articles were highly regarded by Kremlin watchers (Ford 2007; Griffiths 1962) and were quoted in 1961 in the CIA-sponsored *China Quarterly* (Macfaquhar and Gittings 1995) in an article, 'The Dismissal of Marshal P'eng Teh-huai', by 'David A. Charles'. It argued that the rift had developed following P'eng's dismissal in 1959 for 'intriguing' with the Soviet leader. "Charles" - senior MI6 officer, Frank Rendle - was at the centre of a major factional clash within MI6 and the CIA over the Sino-Soviet split (Dorril 2000:713-4). Was the split real, which Rendle believed, or was it a deception to confuse Western governments, as stated by the CIA's Angleton.

In 1963, Crankshaw published *The New Cold War: Moscow v. Peking* and, in 1964, David Floyd's *Mao Against Khrushchev: A Short History of the Sino-Soviet Conflict* - published by the CIA-backed Praeger press - argued that the "monolith solidarity" of the past had gone and that "each Communist Party, each Communist-controlled country must be studied individually and treated individually". The MI6 officer dealing with Rendle's analysis, Nigel Clive, officially pronounced the split genuine and passed details on to the foreign editor of the *Economist,* Brian Crozier (Crozier 1993:55-59); identified by *Izvestiya (*Lyadov and Rozin 1969) as a journalist who "provides cover for the agents on brief assignments abroad, and furnishes intelligence information from time to time".

Crozier's obituary in the *Guardian* (August 11 2012) portrayed him as "a political vigilante who unashamedly cultivated a close, mutually beneficial, relationship with MI6". As a Reuters correspondent in Saigon, MI6 officer Donald Lancaster exchanged information with him and in 1954 helped him obtain his position at the *Economist* (Crozier 1993:20-21 & 31-32). His source for "occasional scoops", Frank Rendle, gave him access to the Service's analytic staff and secret briefing papers, which led in 1965 to the book, *South-East Asia in Turmoil*, Crozier's pro-MI6 view of Vietnam which claimed that there was "little evidence of direct Chinese Communist involvement in the so-called 'liberation' movements in the area". A year later he wrote an MI6-sponsored 'Background Book', *The Struggle for the Third World* (Crozier 1993:55-59).

Crankshaw was identified in KGB files brought to the West by Vasili Mitrokhin (Andrew and Mitrokhin 2000:529-30) as a particular target of the Soviets. In 1968, he

let fly with a series of anti-Soviet articles in his 'Russia Today' column**17** - 'KGB turns the clock back to Stalin' (February 11); 'Another nail in coffin of world revolution' (May 10); 'The cold Soviet aggression was the expression of a crisis in the Soviet Union' (August 25); 'The Soviet dinosaur is stuck in the swamp - and dying' (September 1). The articles infuriated Soviet leaders and the KGB tried various methods to intimidate him, including blackmail over his sexual liaisons in Moscow, where he had been photographed engaged in "sexual frolics". KGB head Yuri Andropov sanctioned an operation to make the photographs public but, according to Mitrokhin (529-30), this was abandoned when the London residency calculated that it would backfire, since Crankshaw would not succumb to threats. In December 1968 the Soviets released the *Izvestiya* list, where Crankshaw featured prominently but, by then, he had retired from the *Observer*.

Conclusion

Oliver Boyd-Barrett (2004:448) suggests that we need to peer into a “black box” if we are to seek confirmation of the secret operational transactions that occur for the implementation of Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model. This paper has shown that it is possible shed some light on the darkness. It has confirmed that there in the manipulation of the public opinion and the use of propaganda, there is a degree of fusion between state and news media practices that goes beyond the everyday dynamics. And that some journalists go well beyond, or rather *against* the call of duty, in their collaboration, direct or indirect, with third parties. This is the additional filter – the “buying out” of journalists or their employers by intelligence agencies – which Boyd-Barrett (2004) suggests is a sixth filter.

There is sufficient evidence in the public domain from journalists' own memoirs, archives, diaries and intelligence-derived material to suggest that the *Izvestiya* list is reliable and is based on MI6 files which Blake had handed over to the KGB in 1959. The published names from the list reported by correspondents in Moscow were a small fraction of a much larger photographic list of journalist agents which was not released and possibly still resides in the KGB archives. Some of those additional names not included in the newspaper accounts are listed in the Appendix.

There is the question about the precise nature of the journalist ties to the intelligence service, MI6. Were the files based on casual contacts and exaggerated - a not unknown practice in intelligence agencies. Was there a legitimate relationship that might occur between a journalist seeking information from an intelligence officer; or did they record accurately the running of a journalist as an agent? Clearly, there were journalists who would dispute the term 'agent' and would class their own role as that of news-gatherer. There were, however, a small number of journalists who had an MI6 handler, and were provided with cover and received payment. As Philip Knightley wrote in the *Guardian* (May 24 2008), "All this could have been considered just a bit of James Bondish fun, but for the fact that it entitles every foreign security service to believe that all British journalists working abroad must be spies."

It seems that newspaper proprietors were willing to co-operate with MI6 in allowing the Service to use their journalists for assignments, intelligence-gathering, and for

publishing very specific intelligence-related articles. The above study has touched on only small area but, hopefully, it has opened up possibilities for more wide-ranging studies of the press-intelligence relationship. It is known, for instance, that the main area of recruitment of journalists was in the Middle East. In the late 1940s, Hector McNeil, a Foreign Office minister liaising with MI6, assured Cyrus Sulzberger (1969: 412 & 654) of the *New York Times* that British intelligence "only hires journalists in the Middle East". To date, little has been done on the precise role MI6-subsidised news agencies (see Fletcher, 1982; Jenks 2001) - files relating to more than a dozen such agencies have been held back from the National Archive - played in key events such as Suez. It is unlikely that MI6 is going to make available its files in this area of study but if researchers venture outside of the traditional archives and dig deep into material in the public domain, particularly given the increasing availability of digital newspaper archives, then we might be able to sketch out a more precise picture of what role the press really did play during the Cold War.

Notes

1. Copies of the Russian and East German newspapers and magazine articles referred to are in the BBC File. BBC Written Archives, Caversham. Communist Attacks on BBC 1968-1984. File One. E40/388 XS Registry D345-008. References to British newspapers are to hard copies.
2. Email exchange. 2013. with author and presenter of BBC Radio Four programme, Document, Jeremy Dunn.
3. *The Times*, April 25 1993.

4. The *Guardian*, May 24 2008.
5. Obituaries for Henry Brandon, the *Independent*, April 23 1993; *The Times*, April 25 1993.
6. Derek Davies obituary, *The Times*, September 20 2002.
7. Donald Lancaster obituary, *Daily Telegraph*, January 23 1992.
8. David Astor obituary, *Daily Telegraph*, December 8 2001.
9. This information was given to the author by two senior journalists on the *Observer*.
10. Mark Frankland obituary, the *Observer*, April 15 2012.
11. 'The Last testimony of George Kennedy Young.' *Lobster*, 19, 1990.
12. Nigel Clive obituary, the *Independent*, May 9 2001.
13. John Rettie recalled this episode in the *Observer*, February 26 and June 22 2006.
14. The *Guardian*, August 21 2012. Robert Service email, August 23 2012.
15. David Shukman email, September 18 2012.
16. Victor Grayevsky obituary, the *Independent*, November 17 2007.
17. The Edward Crankshaw articles were accessed using ProQuest Historical Newspapers digital archive.
18. Tracey, L. 2013. Interview. 20 & 21 November.
19. The series Kaktai Kaltina (Facts Accuse) Vilinus. 1962-70. Ran to ten volumes with testimony of witnesses and transcripts of guerrillas.
20. Dorril. S. 1983. "Permindex: The International Trade in Disinformation". *Lobste*r. 3. Declassified CIA documents confirm the Dorril claim. Holland, M. 2007. "The lie that linked CIA to the Kennedy Assassination". *Center for the Study of Intelligence*. April 14.

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7,069 words

APPENDIX

The BBC obtained photographic copies of parts of the lists dated "September 1959", which were shown to journalists in Moscow. They are not complete. The below is based on what is in the BBC file (Communist Attacks on BBC 1968-1984), names in the *Current Digest of the Russian Press* (January 8 1969), a list reproduced in the East

German magazine *Horizont* (March 1969) and those in the British press reporting (*The Times* and *Daily Telegraph*, December 21 1968). There were more in Continental newspapers (*Le Monde* for instance) but I have not been able to trace those.

Special Operational - BIN Press Contacts – Potential Use and Limitations

Z.1. F. Vanden Heuvel (BIN 1153) - case officer to Lord Arran, *Daily Mail*, (BIN 946) and Butterworth (scientific publications), a director of which, John Whitlock (BIN 952), "provides cover for Ossian Goulding" (*Daily Telegraph* special correspondent during the war).

BIN CO-ORD Edward G. Boxshall

BIN 01 Rex Bosley – case officer for R. A. Watson, Scientific Managing Editor of *Research*.

01/A (Guy Bratt) George Blake

01/B Owen – case officer to Paulton (London correspondent of *Arbeiter Zeitung*, Vienna, and freelance for *The Observer*) – "accepts briefs for interviewing travellers from SOV BLOC". Also for Andrew Mackenzie, London correspondent of the *Sheffield Telegraph* (employed by the editorial staff of Kemsley newspapers).

01/B.1 Ehrenberg

01/C Mackay – case officer to Paul Richey, freelance with *Daily Express*, (BIN 192) "retains good relationship with Editor".

01/D Harley – case officer for John Gammie, Managing Director of Odhams Group and W. K. Fitch, Manager and Editor of the *Pharmaceutical Journal*.

01/M P. Morgan, Editor *British Plastic*, Iliffe & Sons.

02 Morris

04 de Lazlo

06 Clunas

07 Cumming

51 Arthur Franks – case officer to Stuart Mclean (Vice Chairman Associated Newspapers) who provides “facilities”, David Astor, Editor *The Observer* (BIN183), and Francis Gray (BIN 128).

085 Wayland Hilton-Young (Lord Kennet) *The Observer*. “He is very fond of money and miserly.”

110 Mark Arnold-Forster (*The Observer*).

120 Edward Crankshaw (*The Observer*) – “he is used to obtain intelligence information, and also to carry out other intelligence assignments”.

943 Michael Berry (Lord Hartwell) and Farr (*Daily Telegraph*).

Those mentioned without BIN numbers are Tom Harris, Michael Field, Roy Pawley (*Telegraph*); Henry Brandon (*Sunday Times*); W. I. Farr (*Mail*); Brian Crozier (*Economist*) and Leonard Smith (BBC).

They share the same ideological outlook as their source – the anti-communism of the Cold War.

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