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THE *Strange*
ETIQUETTEOF
SPYING

When we admitted
what the U-2 was
up to, we violated
some ancient and
"honorable" rules

By COLONEL ULIUS AMOSS

Director, International Services of Information Foundation

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In the misty world of espionage there are unwritten laws as meticulously observed as the etiquette of a drawing room. Anybody who has ever read a spy story is aware that the hero, if captured, doesn't hasten to blab. Anyone who has sat up to watch international intrigue on the late, late show knows full well that a government caught with its hand in a jam pot is too busy licking its fingers to say a word.

These aren't just fictional fables. To a man or a government engaged in the surreptitious acquisition of valuable information they are cardinal rules of the business. Yet both of them were blatantly flouted when the U-2 dropped down in the Russian Urals on May Day. It's no wonder Khrushchev was so thunderously agitated. He knows how the game should be played. He must have been as angry and confused as a baseball fan would be if a runner trapped between third and home suddenly decided to dash across the diamond and claim safety at first base.

This country, of course, is riddled with Soviet agents and spies, both professional and amateur. One of them undoubtedly has passed along the dissertation on espionage in the Columbia Encyclopedia, which is compiled and edited at Columbia University of which Dwight Eisenhower used to be president. It says: "Among nations at peace with each other espionage is never officially admitted but is almost always practiced." The emphasis is mine. The puzzlement is Khrushchev's.

The ethics of espionage, if such an intrinsically dishonorable business can be said to have niceties, are recognized very quickly by those who find themselves involved. During the last war the German and American lines faced each other for months in a holding action above Nice in the Maritime Alps. About halfway between the two lines was the village of Sospel in which was the Golf Hotel, the only respectable oasis for miles around.

Reconnoitering parties were sent out at night

by both sides to seek information about possible new operations. A tacit agreement soon developed that 1) the German and American operatives would not attempt to visit the Golf Hotel on the same night and 2) although some portions of the hotel could be booby-trapped by either side, other parts were to remain immune. This mutual understanding, or ethic, lent a moist happiness to a hundred evenings that could otherwise have been dryly dreary.

It may be that the United States has decided the old rules don't apply in this high-flying, electronic age when it is spending \$500 million a year on the Central Intelligence Agency and countless other millions on other forms of secret data gathering. Things were certainly different when I started spying my country as a collector of coveted intelligence during the early '30s. If I had been picked up in Athens, for example, where I was first sent, nobody in Washington would even have recognized my name.

"You're on your own," they told me. "Establish a cover right away and only contact us when you have something important to report." By a "cover" they meant a legitimate reason for being on hand. I already had a good excuse for being in Athens and I bolstered it by attending a school of art, since I had always been interested in drawing.

What I was after was information about the financial stability of Greece. The most likely source was a certain cabinet member who, with his brother, owned one of the large banks. I observed that he met his brother every afternoon at a sidewalk cafe. Each time, as they chatted, the same ragamuffin bootblack shined their shoes. It was easy to persuade my art instructor to engage this little fellow as a model in the evenings and we became friends.

We developed a game. "I'll bet you a talro I can tell you what those two men were talking about this afternoon." I would say, and make some wild guess. He'd laugh and tell me what they said

and collect his coin. One evening when I guessed he said: "Oh, no, the big one told the little one 'Sell a million pounds sterling for me and you'd better do the same for yourself.'"

This let me know that England was going off the gold standard. I sent a coded cable to Washington, my first really substantial achievement in the profession that has taken most of my life. Also, this may answer a question for some of my friends who wonder why I have a sketch of a Greek bootblack hanging in my study.

To brush up on my Greek for the sojourn in Athens I bought and read a six-volume set on the history of Filike Hetairia, or Friendly Society—Greece's underground in the 1820s in her war of independence against Turkey. A dozen years after I left Greece, when I was in OSS in 1943 and stationed in Cairo, my opposite number in an allied camp, told me excitedly: "I've got the biggest thing in espionage history—the character and description of every officer in the German occupation forces in Greece and a list of every member of the Greek underground, plus where every one of them is stationed." He was so pleased that he showed it to me. (This is another tenet of espionage—you have to know whom to trust.)

I looked it over. "Remarkable," I said. "What did it cost you?" He answered proudly, "Only \$60,000." "What a pity," I observed. "I could have given you a much better deal." He glared at me and walked away before I could tell him that this was a direct translation of "Filike Hetairia" with the Turkish names transposed into German. Of course there are rogues in our business, but I couldn't hate this one. The work of translating six volumes is worth something.

Speaking of rogues, I should perhaps make clear some of the finer distinctions in espionage. The person who is sent on a fact-gathering mission by his or her government is an agent. Usually an agent is a patriot belonging to the military or civilian services of his country and can be trusted

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implicitly—well, almost implicitly. There are temptations.

He is not, in our terminology, a spy. Spies are the informants, either paid or voluntary, who supply the agents with the stuff they are looking for. It is not at all unusual for a spy to serve two masters. Governments have reluctantly accepted the fact that this is often necessary if the spy is to continue to exist in one of the world's most perilous occupations.

Although it is acceptable unwritten code of espionage for a spy to be walled for two conflicting interests, there is a definite limit beyond which his or her activities cannot go. Princess Tamara must have known that. Washington cabled me in Cairo to keep an eye on her. I didn't mind at all. She was a very beautiful redhead (the color may have been as phony as her title). Her specialty was getting American officers drunk and cuddly.

I got to know her and, in a way, like her. My liking lessened considerably when someone took a pot shot at me one afternoon while we were walking down the Kasr el Aini, one of Cairo's main streets. "Close, wasn't it?" she said coolly. "Probably just a warning that you shouldn't pry too deeply into my affairs." She hinted broadly that she was working for the British, and the British confirmed this. It didn't account for her interest in American officers, so I wasn't at all surprised when I discovered that she was also being paid by the German Admiral Canaris.

Shortly before the following Christmas I had a mission to London. The RAF plane that was taking me back had engine trouble and was forced to land on a Libyan airstrip. I had resigned myself to spending a miserable Christmas Eve, but along—for a refueling—came a Soviet plane with several officers, one of whom spoke English. "Going to Cairo?" he asked. I jumped at the chance.

On the way, very casually, he asked me if I knew Princess Tamara. Of course I said I didn't, but I made it a point to see who was dancing that night at Shepherd's Hotel. When Tamara and the Red Colonel swept past me in close embrace, I kept my face well covered. Before morning I let the word get around. Tamara vanished, I know not where. I do know that in the espionage industry two may be company, but three is a crowd nobody likes.

Agents or spies grow to be suspicious of everyone. I've known some who didn't even trust the members of their own family and maybe rightly so. When I was attempting to arrange Vassily Stalin's transfer across the German-Czech border after his father's death, I had to deal with a spy gang in Munich consisting of a sleek hussy named Lili, her husband, her lover, her sweet-faced old mother, called Frau, and two other men.

My plan to bring Vassily to the United States, where he would have been vastly valuable as an informant, failed—largely because the spies crossed me up. Later I learned that Lili was in a German prison, put there by her mother (the real leader of the gang, it turned out), who disappeared behind the Iron Curtain. It was wise for the old Frau to flee because some agent in the Western World would certainly have managed her execution for double-dealing—not with me but within her own group.

Both amateur and professional spies have scruples, even those who may be selling out their own country. For example, many of them feed vital facts to the International Services of Information Foundation, a privately-supported global espionage system which I organized and have directed for 14 years. We have no connection with the government and merely pass along our gleanings to subscribers.

All the major powers train espionage agents in secret "schools," but the most effective ones often come from unexpected sources. There was a young Britisher named John Brewster who sold heavy machinery. Traveling through the Balkans in 1948, the year of the Berlin blockade, he noticed that wherever he passed large rivers, pontoon sections were being assembled as emergency bridges. Fearing a possible Red pincer movement against West Germany, he hurried back to London and got the information to Britain's vast Secret Intelligence service. Brewster was promptly sworn in as a secret agent—last I heard he was observing all the rules of the strange etiquette of spying.

"I Tried to Kidnap Stalin's Son," The American Weekly, Nov. 8, 1953.