

RADIO TV REPORTS, INC.

15 WEST 47TH STREET, NEW YORK 36, N. Y.

3333 CONNECTICUT AVENUE, N. W., WASHINGTON 8, D. C.

FOR

*MR*

CIA - MAIL ROOM LIBRARY

PROGRAM

"Book Beat"

STATION

WETA-TV

*"Educational TV"*

*File*

DATE

January 29, 1965 10:30 P.M.

CITY

Washington, D. C.

INTERVIEW WITH AUTHOR OF "THE INVISTIBLE GOVERNMENT"

HOST: Robert Cromie, Editor of "Books Today,"  
Chicago Tribune

GUEST: Thomas Ross, Washington Bureau, Chicago  
Sunday Times

CROMIE: "Tom, you incidentally, were a Nieman Fellow, weren't you - and just got back from your year at Harvard, I think, in what - June?"

ROSS: "Just got back - well, I got back in May, and got into the thick of the political campaign almost immediately. Had a very good year - it was very pleasant to get out of the swim of things for a bit and do a little more reflective thinking and a little bit more reflective writing."

CROMIE: "I would think - what were you studying?"

ROSS: "I was doing, principally, work in the area of Chinese and Russian studies - not the language, but the political science, the history of the area although I did dabble in a few other things - constitutional law, a little government and science. We aren't required to take a set curriculum under the Nieman Fellowship, and you can pretty much determine what you wish to take, and I spread myself rather thin."

CROMIE: "Aren't you a Yale man?"

ROSS: "Indeed I am."

-2-

CROMIE: "Were you welcomed with open arms at Harvard?"

ROSS: "Well, I would say, very pleasantly welcomed, and had a magnificent year. It's a marvelous school."

CROMIE: "I think it's a great program, too - so pleasant and so useful for a newspaper man to be able to do this."

ROSS: "Yes, I think it's the only way that a newspaper man really could afford to take a year off which, I think, is very, very important after you've been in the swim of things for so long. I think you need a year to gain a little perspective."

CROMIE: "Well, almost like a sabbatical except, of course you can't do it every seven years. It would be nice if you could. Well, tell me about your book. How did you happen to decide to write a book - you and Mr. Weiss - about the CIA?"

ROSS: "Well, Dave Weiss and I write a previous book called "The U-2 Affair," and that dealt with Francis Gary Powers and the U-2 that was shot down over Russia and broke up the Summit in 1960. And, doing the work on this book we became fascinated with the entire area of intelligence. We saw a very small part of the iceberg doing this, and it seemed to us that there was enormous areas of this iceberg that were not seen by the American people and, although not all of it should be seen, we felt that large parts of it could and should be seen by the American people because, after all, it's their government. They must ultimately determine how they wish the government to run."

CROMIE: "Well, that's an interesting comparison - the iceberg bit. Icebergs are dangerous and do you think the CIA is dangerous?"

ROSS: "Well, I think the CIA, in certain of its aspects, is dangerous. I think - we came to the conclusion after our investigation and after writing the book - that the CIA requires greater control by Congress, greater control by the executive branch of the government. Right now Congress is completely ignorant - Congress, at large, is completely ignorant of the activities of the CIA. They do not know how much money the CIA spends. They do not know how many people work for the CIA."

CROMIE: "Does the CIA know how many people work for it by now?"

-3-

ROSS: "Oh yes, I think their internal orders and controls are very good and very tight. But there is really no way in which the Congress which is, after all, the arm of the government which represents the people most directly - there is no way in which Congress can really determine what the CIA or, really, the other branches of the invisible government - the other intelligence agencies - are doing because the CIA is exempted from the normal requirements of government agencies to report on the people they have hired, and also to report on how they're using their funds. The Director of Central Intelligence has a complete blank check on using his money without regulational audit by any other branch of the government."

CROMIE: "Didn't they have - I remember in your book - they at one time tried to get a certain sum in the budget for a new building, and they concealed it so well that it was thrown out of the budget because nobody could figure out what it was."

ROSS: "Yes, when the original budget went up it - all of CIA's funds and most of the funds for the various clandestine intelligence operations of other agencies of the government, are concealed under other appropriations, mainly in the Department of Defense. We estimate that the various agencies of intelligence in the government spend \$4,000,000,000 a year, and they employ approximately 200,000 people. Well, these figures will never be found in the federal budget because they are purposely concealed. They're mainly concealed in the Defense Department budget under huge missile contracts, airplane contracts. In areas where the funds are so big, one would not really know where they are. A few people do know - the Comptroller at the Pentagon knows, the Director of the International Division of the Budget Bureau knows, but beyond that maybe a handful of people outside of the President really know."

CROMIE: "Well, even the President's top advisors don't know what the CIA is doing and I suspect, sometimes, the President himself. Is that almost a fair statement?"

ROSS: "Well, I think in detail - the details of what the agency does - I think it's a fair statement to say that the highest officials in the government rarely know, in minute detail, what the agency is up to. In broad outlines I think it's quite clear that most of the - certainly, all of the major operations which the agency has conducted such as the Bay of Pigs, or the overthrow of Mossedegh in Iran, or the overthrow of Abends in Guatemala - these were clearly authorized by the President. But, authorization in

-4-

in broad outline is a great deal different from control in detail. And, I think where the agency has gone wrong or has exceeded its authority in many areas is in its detail. It has actually taken a mandate and used that mandate to carry out an operation."

CROMIE: "Was it Guatemala where they tried to enlist a refugee politician - what they said, we are going to help overthrow your government. We would like you to take over if - and then they listed several things they were supposed to do including disbanding the railroad workers union - was that Guatemala?"

ROSS: "That was in Guatemala. We did not cite this on our own authority in the book. We quote the man who was involved, and I am not prepared to state the authenticity of this. But he states it as authentic and other people have stated it as authentic."

CROMIE: "Well, now that's a frightening thing if they are actually doing things of this nature - I mean, not only overthrowing a government but telling a new government what it may do."

ROSS: "Well, I think much of the operation of the Central Intelligence Agency has been to bolster certain governments, to gain influential position with certain governments, such as the (Ziem?) government in Viet Nam in which the agency, under direction from Eisenhower and Kennedy, maintained a very intimate relationship with this regime - such an intimate relationship that when the regime struck at the Buddhists and invaded the Buddhist temples just shortly before the regime fell, there was a very popular misconception in Viet Nam that the United States Government was actively participating in these raids on a religious group. And, very often, in many parts of the world the agency has become so closely allied with certain elements within a government that, in fact, at least among the sophisticated elements of those countries the United States is assumed to be backing one faction against another."

CROMIE: "Well, this explains many of the riots - I would think - that are otherwise unexplainable. I mean, suddenly, you have an uprising of students against the United States and sometimes it's probably because of something that CIA agents are doing, or that they think they're doing."

ROSS: "Right, I think the CIA is accused of doing a lot more things than it is doing. By the same token it does a lot of

-5-

things which no one has the slightest conception that it's doing. After all, it of necessity must be a secret organization. It is impossible for an intelligence operation to operate openly. On the other hand, I think the main thrust of our book is that - yes, in this unfortunately complicated world you've got a cold war, and you're fighting a rather unscrupulous enemy - you do have to have this type of organization. But if this organization is not to warp the very meaning of a democracy, you must keep very tight control on it. And we have the feeling, particularly in the Eisenhower years, that when Allen Dulles was the head of the CIA, and his brother, John Foster Dulles, was Secretary of State, that this agency had a carte blanche to do many, many things which were not necessarily in the long range interest of the United States."

CROMIE: "Well, I knew that Americans had flown, for instance, combat mission in various places, but I didn't realize that the CIA had hired them which, apparently, they did in a couple of places - or arranged for them to fly - I guess, Guatemala was one, wasn't it?"

ROSS: "Guatemala - I think, most significantly - the Bay of Pigs - but also in Indonesia, a story which, until we narrated it in this book, was essentially unknown other than to a few high government officials. . . . Of Sukarno - the attempt in 1958 - the CIA-backed attempt to overthrow Sukarno. And many people have wondered - I think many average Americans must have paused many times and asked themselves why Sukarno is so hostile to the United States. Well, he might have his own reasons for being hostile - and he undoubtedly was hostile prior to the intervention of the CIA into this operation, but he must inevitably have become entrenched in his hostility by the fact that he know very well that the United States Government, acting through the CIA, actively attempted to overthrow his government."

CROMIE: "Didn't the late President Kennedy say this flatly - that no wonder Sukarno is unhappy. He knows that we have been trying to overthrow him?"

ROSS: "That's exactly what he said. He didn't say it in public. He said it privately when Sukarno came to visit him just the week after the Bay of Pigs, and Kennedy at that point was not particularly happy with the CIA nor with the invisible government at large, and he cited this as an example that here was a man who was coming to see him. He was going to have to deal with him in a normal diplomatic way knowing full well that Sukarno knew full well that the United States Government had come to overthrow him."

-6-

CROMIE: "It's an odd situation."

ROSS: "Indeed it is."

CROMIE: "Well, of course the Central Intelligence Agency headquarters is in Washington."

ROSS: "Yes."

CROMIE: "And they finally got their big new building, didn't they?"

ROSS: "Yes, they have a \$46,000,000 building in Langley, Virginia which is about a fifteen minute drive from downtown Washington."

CROMIE: "Well, is this the building which ties in with that funny story about the high rise apartment that you tell? Would you repeat it - I love it."

ROSS: "Well, there was a developer who bought a parcel of land, close by the projected site of the CIA -- in fact the CIA building was already up, and he was determined that from one of the windows in this projected building, a man with a pair of binoculars would be able to look into various offices in the CIA, including the office of John McCone, the Director of Central Intelligence. And conceivably with a high enough telescopic lens, perhaps even read documents, and the CIA succeeded in avoiding the building of this property."

CROMIE: "You'd think it would have been cheaper to buy shades, wouldn't you?"

ROSS: "Well I would think so, but then again, they need light too."

CROMIE: "I suppose, although I admired the doctor. Wasn't there a doctor in the neighborhood who beat them -- refused to sell his house?"

ROSS: "Yes, he was able to keep his house, and they were able to build some screening trees and shrubbery, so at least in the summer he can't see very much."

CROMIE: "You also had a charming -- I was going to say charming, but it wasn't charming -- you also had a well, an amusing-sinister story about someone who had a message to deliver to McCone, and came back, unable to deliver the message, but very disheveled and unhappy. Do you remember that?"

- 7 -

ROSS: "Yes, this was Senator Church, had discovered something which he thought ought to be brought to the attention of the Director of Central Intelligence, and he got a normal runner from Capitol Hill, and gave him this message, in a congressional envelope and sent him off to the agency to deliver it. And he arrived at the agency and he could get nowhere. He couldn't get inside the building to deliver it -- no one would take the envelope from him. Finally he was supposed to go back to Senator Church's office to report this to him, and they put it in the mail, and presumably the letter finally got to him."

CROMIE: "You have many many interesting and unusual things. For instance, the collection of the spy story library which you say the CIA has. How did you find out about that? You say they have thousands of volumes apparently -- James Bond and all the suspense and spy story thrillers."

ROSS: "This came from a source which you, as a good newspaper man wouldn't want me to reveal, and I think a great deal of the information in our book has come obviously from people in a position to know -- people high in government, within and without the intelligence community, who feel that these things should legitimately be put on the public record. Some -- a great deal of what is in our book is at the same time a compilation of open sources. I think many people within the government think that they have really kept secret much more than they actually have. And I think this is a -- we feel we have done another service in this regard. Certain people within the CIA complained when our book first came out --"

CROMIE: "Did they try to stop you, Tom?"

ROSS: "They tried to stop the book, yes, then they tried to have the book changed, and then, Mr. Cerf, who will be on your program later, is probably more aware of the details of this than I am, because --"

CROMIE: "Yes I think Bennett will be on next Wednesday -- we'll ask him about it."

ROSS: "It was mainly done through New York, through the Random House, rather than through us. But their main objection was that we named certain people in this book, which they insisted had never been disclosed before. But the fact of the matter is that, unknown to them, these people had been disclosed. They were easily documented from public records, from court hearings, things of this sort, in positions where the Russian espionage apparatus -- any other espionage apparatus -- must have inevitably have known these facts, and yet for the Agency to work on the assumption that certain of their people were really unknown, seems to me to be a very dangerous practice, because if they were putting a man who is known to the communist apparatus, into an operation -- where he was unknown -- he'd be the most easy person in the world to be surveyed by the communists, and that was rather disconcerting to us. I think they

- 8 -

should be aware, if of nothing else, they should be aware of what of their operations have already been disclosed, and what of their personnel have already been disclosed."

CROMIE: "Well in some of the operations, in Laos I think, and possibly Guatemala, or one of the South -- maybe Nicaragua, you mentioned that the CIA men were almost swaggering around town, that everyone around town knew who they were."

ROSS: "Precisely. I think there's a -- the CIA has a great deal of difficulty in this regard. Americans do not have a long and honored tradition of spying. The British seem to have the greatest sense of this sort of thing. An awful lot of our agents overseas, particularly on a lower level, take -- chafe a bit under the fact that they cannot get any publicity or credit for what they do, and in one way or another they very often let it be known, what type of work they are doing, in order to attempt to gain some sort of normal human reward for what they are doing. And this very often leads to disclosures of wholesale number of the people who should be kept secret."

CROMIE: "Well, you have a chapter in here on the Peace Corps and Sarge Shriver's I think very wise efforts to be sure that the Central Intelligence Agency's operatives do not infiltrate the Peace Corps and use it for a cover."

ROSS: "Yes, well, when Shriver took over the Peace Corps shortly after the election of his brother-in-law, President Kennedy, he had gotten word from various foreign governments, from various diplomats with whom the Peace Corps were negotiating, that these governments were suspicious the CIA was going to be used as a front -- a natural suspicion really -- rather that the Peace Corps was going to be used as a front for CIA -- and the communists were peddling this line -- propaganda, I think, to this effect. And Shriver felt that this would be the ruin of the Peace Corps, if any taint whatsoever had fallen upon it, that the whole thrust, the whole idealistic thrust of the CIA (SIC) would have been undermined. And he went to President Kennedy, and asked for assurances, and President Kennedy delivered assurances to Shriver, and he also passed word to Allen Dulles and subsequently to John McCone, that the agency was not to infiltrate the Peace Corps. And to Shriver's satisfaction they have not, and to my satisfaction they have not.

"But nonetheless, because of their modes of operation in other areas and in other parts of the world, suspicion still lingers in the minds of many foreign governments."

CROMIE: "Well you did say that 15 or 20 possibly ex-CIA employees had tried to get into the Peace Corps, but this of course could have been just a routine attempt to get a job -- it wouldn't necessarily mean that they were trying to get in for any ulterior



- 9 -

purpose."

ROSS: "No, and all of these people had already severed their relationship with the Agency."

CROMIE: "Most of them had minor jobs anyway, like secretaries."

ROSS: "Most of them had minor jobs. Nonetheless Shriver issued a flat prohibition against the hiring of anyone who had previously worked for the CIA, for fear that this would get out, and would appear to be infiltration of some sort."

CROMIE: "Well, I liked your sample question too, when you were telling about the indoctrination or the lectures they gave future Peace Corps members. One of the questions was 'What would you do if a CIA man came up to you, and said "let's go and get a cup of coffee," and then said, "look, I don't want you to work for us, but couldn't we just meet once in a while and sort of talk over, you know --" and of course if they give the wrong answer to that, to the Peace Corps people, if they said yes they would talk it over with him, then they didn't get in."

ROSS: "Yes. In fact their admonition was not only were they not to talk to these people, but that if anyone approached them, they were to immediately report the fact that they had been approached, so that this word gets passed to Washington, and in turn Shriver could make sure that this word was passed to the Agency."

CROMIE: "Well some of the things that the CIA has done, I suppose, has been very valuable to us --"

ROSS: "Oh, magnificently valuable."

CROMIE: "Which is the most valuable, would you say?"

ROSS: "Well, despite the fact that it ended in ignominious failure, the U-2 operation, which was run by Richard Bissell, a brilliant former Deputy Director --"

CROMIE: "Oh, the man who got the invisible medal from the invisible government?"

ROSS: "Yes indeed. Mr. Bissell was the architect of the invasion of the Bay of Pigs, and which we outlined in some considerable detail in the book, and I think unjustly he has taken most of the brunt of the failure, when, as President Kennedy said, there are enough mistakes to go all around on that one. When Bissell left the Agency about a year later -- largely as a result of this failure -- of the Bay of Pigs -- he was in such public disrepute that people, and yet in such high regard within the

- 10 -

government, that they felt he should be honored in some way. And yet you can't make a public presentation to a man who is supposed to be a secret operative. So what in fact they did, is they gave him a private citation, which he is not allowed to display, show, wear, or in any way allude to. In fact as we say in the book, the invisible government presented him with an invisible medal."

CROMIE: "When we're speaking of the Bay of Pigs, I suppose it's only fair to the late President Kennedy to mention that, of course, as most people know if they remember, it was begun -- the planning for the Bay of Pigs under President Eisenhower."

ROSS: "Yes indeed. The operation had started many many many months before President Kennedy took it over. Although, as President Kennedy rightly said, he was the man who finally authorized it, and he was the man who was finally responsible. He didn't attempt to duck this one."

CROMIE: "Well there was a great foul-up on the air cover at the Bay of Pigs."

ROSS: "Yes, we go into great detail in the book, as to the circumstances surrounding the air cover controversy. You may recall that after it failed -- after the Bay of Pigs failed -- there was a great rumble, largely politically oriented, but also from many people who were more detached, that it had failed because Kennedy had withdrawn a promise to provide United States military aircraft, manned by United States military personnel, to make sure that the Cuban refugees who hit the beaches would be protected.

"But this is an erroneous conception. Kennedy, in fact, and Eisenhower, in fact, had specifically placed a prohibition on the use of any overt U. S. military forces. The mix-up on the air cover as I say, we go into in some detail in the book. The difficulty was that Castro's Air Force was supposed to have been destroyed on the ground by planes -- bombers that were being flown by Cuban refugees."

CROMIE: "Ostensibly manned by people who had taken off from Cuban bases and were bombing their own places before coming over here?"

ROSS: "That's right. Ostensibly defectors, but in fact they were based in Central America --"

CROMIE: "And directed by the CIA?"

ROSS: "And directed by the CIA. But these people were Cubans. They were not Americans. And the difficulty, one of the great perhaps a conundrum which will never be unravelled, is whether if President Kennedy had not ordered a second air strike by these Cuban refugees, to be abandoned, whether in fact they could have destroyed Castro's forces on the ground sufficiently so that the

- 11 -

invasion might have succeeded. There is a very split opinion on that within the government."

CROMIE: "Well then didn't we have our own planes over, but they got there at the wrong hour?"

ROSS: "Well at the last minute, after things were going very badly, President Kennedy, as we disclose here, authorized U. S. Navy jets off a carrier, to provide an hour's air shield, something a little bit different than air cover. They were not to take action unless they were fired upon. But they were to provide an air shield for these Cuban exiles, bombers, to make one last attempt to protect the people on the beach, and through a mixup in time, the CIA operated -- sent its message based upon Central American time, where the pilots were based. The Navy sent its message based upon Greenwich mean time, which is what the Navy always operates under, and the planes did not rendezvous over the beaches at the proper moment -- they came an hour apart."

CROMIE: "That's a classic foul-up, isn't it?"

ROSS: "Classic. But something which happens in military operations, not only those directed by the CIA --"

CROMIE: "Well this is a great cloak and dagger book, if I may pay you that compliment, and I think it is as fascinating as fiction, and sounds like fiction, although I know it isn't. But, you have so many things about secret bases and people being trained there, and the widows in Birmingham, Alabama, of the Americans who were killed in that Bay of Pigs attempt -- the flyers who hired out to the CIA, under some kind of a trading company, CIA front -- they got checks -- are they still getting checks?"

ROSS: "Yes, they're still getting checks."

CROMIE: "Will they get them for the rest of their lives?"

ROSS: "Presumably. It is --once again it's an area which is shrouded in such secrecy, one would never know ultimately whether they --"

CROMIE: "The decent thing to do."

ROSS: "Yes, I would say so. Our feeling was that they had been rather -- the government had rather shabbily treated these pilots, these Americans who volunteered for this operation, by implying they were soldiers of fortune, and they were doing it just for the money. And in fact I think it was clear that their motivations were mixed, as with most human motivations, and anyone who goes off for whatever motivation, and offers his life for his country deserves better treatment than to be castigated."

CROMIE: "They were told of course that they were doing a patriotic thing."

- 12 -

ROSS: "Yes, indeed. So that, as you say, they had a dual motive."

CROMIE: "Well, it's a lovely book, and I do urge everyone to read it, because I think it's an extremely important book. Now since it came out, has there been any adverse CIA comment, or are they pretty much accepting it?"

ROSS: "Well I think they have pretty much accepted it. I think there was an initial -- mind you, there was not a universal opposition to the book within the CIA, -- but there --"

CROMIE: "It's a very valuable book, Tom. I hate to break in, but we just ran out of time. My guest tonight was Tom Ross, who with David Weiss, has written a book called 'The Invisible Government,' published by Random House. Tom of course, is with the Washington Bureau of the Sun-Times, and I hope you will watch us again next week . . . Bennett Cerf of Random House will be our guest. . . ."