

One Says They're 'Chilling'

# Journalists Detail Contacts with CIA

By Hank Sato

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A Central Intelligence Agency agent might be just another news source in a foreign country but dealing with one could have a "chilling" effect, Richard Halloran, a New York Times reporter, told a Round Table on Asian News at the East-West Center yesterday.

Halloran said CIA agents are required to report everything to their superiors and that if he exchanges information with an agent "it's chilling" to realize that "my name gets on file and sent to Washington."

"And God knows what they do with it over there," he said.

Halloran, who now works in Washington but was for many years a correspondent in Asia, was one of three reporters who discussed problems faced by newsmen based in foreign countries.

THE PROGRAM, which continued today, is sponsored by the Frank E. Gannett Fellowship Program in Asian Studies and the University of Hawaii. Gannett fellows study at the University of Hawaii under grants awarded by the Gannett Newspaper Foundation.

Also on the panel were Keyes Beech, Asian correspondent for the Chicago Daily News for the last 30 years, and Dennis Bloodworth, Far East correspondent of the London Observer. Bloodworth has been in Asia since 1954.

Halloran said he treated CIA agents as news sources but did not cooperate in gathering intelligence information.

"Let them do their own work," he said.

BEECH SAID HE often found CIA agents make better news sources in foreign countries than officials of U.S. embassies.

"They are objective, intelligent and congenial," he said, "and are less wedded to the party line (official U.S. policy)."

He said, "There is always danger that the CIA will try to use you" but that it would be "unnatural for correspondents to avoid CIA sources. We are both in the business of gathering information."

"It's a question of how far you should go. I would frown on anything that went beyond the dialogue."

Beech, a former Star-Bulletin reporter, told about a story he once filed from South Korea about the torturing of prisoners. He said the source of that story was a CIA agent who was "in a turmoil" over such activities.

HE SAID publication of the story created some friction between the United States and Korea because the Korean Central Intelligence Agency "surmised" that a CIA agent was its source.

Beech added, however, that correspondents should try not to be concerned about what repercussions their stories may have.

He also told of a story that the CIA tried to kill "after I sat on it for 19 years."

The story was about two Americans, John T. Downey and Richard Fectau, who flew to China in 1952 to rescue an American spy. Unknown to them, the spy was also working for the Peking government as a double agent.

Downey and Fectau were captured, tried as spies and sent to prison.

At that time Beech had confirmation from American sources that the two men were CIA agents but he did not write the story for fear it would further jeopardize the men.

He said he wrote the story about the time one of the agents was to be

released after spending 20 years in prison. The other agent was serving a life term, he said.

HE SAID WHEN the CIA learned of the story an agent went to his Hong Kong hotel room and asked him not to run the story.

Beech said he told the agent that he would if the CIA had good reasons why the story should not run. "They had no reason," he said.

He said that after the story was cabled to his Chicago office, Richard Helms, then director of the CIA, called his editor and urged him to kill the story. But the editor refused, Beech said.

During a question and answer session, Beech said the CIA tried to recruit him in 1954 when he was in Hong Kong but that he refused.

"If you accept money (from the CIA) then you have sold your soul," he said. "You have lost your integrity — perhaps the only thing a correspondent has going for him."

BLOODWORTH SAID he, too, was recruited by a secret service agency but not by the CIA.

He said overtures were made "more than once" by the KGB of the Soviet Union, adding that foreign correspondents of the Tass Soviet News Agency are trained secret service agents.

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Bloodworth said he has sat through "briefings" by CIA agents but have not worked with them.

"Get a briefing but don't report back (to the agents)," he said.

Bloodworth, a British subject, said he probably has less contacts with the British secret service than Americans have with the CIA because the British service is much more secretive than the CIA.

"They're so secretive you may think you're dealing with diplomats," he said.

ON ANOTHER subject, the three panelists agreed that a correspondent need not know the language of a foreign country to report intelligently from there.

"A good reporter is a good one anywhere," Beech said. He said Ross Monroe, a Canadian, "does the best reporting from China" but does not know Chinese.

Halloran said he would stress basic reportorial abilities if he were to hire a correspondent to send to a foreign country.

He added that the reporter should be "steeped in the history of the country" to which he is being assigned and must have a good background of its literature, religion and politics.