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ON PAGE 4

THE PARADE MAGAZINE
Washington Post
8 October 1978

The Man Who Sells Bro

by Joseph E. Persico

In December 1976, a man in a shapeless gray suit entered a suburban building within sight of the nation's capital. In an office on the ninth floor he peeled \$2000 from a thick roll of bills and left carrying a cardboard box. In it were thousands of micro-filmed documents marked "Secret" and "Top Secret." The man was an official of the Soviet embassy. The ninth-floor office belonged to the Carrollton Press, Inc. And the transaction was completely legitimate.

The Soviet Union was merely one among hundreds of subscribers to a highly unusual publishing venture—an enterprise possible only in a society as open as the United States's. Carrollton's Declassified Documents Reference System sells recently unveiled official secrets from the files of the CIA, FBI, Pentagon, State Department and other federal agencies. The idea was born in the fertile imagination of William Walter Buchanan, a former CIA officer and Carrollton's founder.

Buchanan, 50, left the CIA in 1957. After several years as a management consultant and publishing executive, he formed the Carrollton Press in 1967. Initially, the firm published indexes to scholarly journals and innocuous government documents of interest primarily to libraries.

Then, in 1974, Congress overhauled the Freedom of Information Act. Suddenly, thousands of official secrets were being declassified. "I knew," Buchanan says, "that there was no way for scholars, libraries or ordinary citizens to find out which documents were available. Nobody in the government even knew."

In time-honored American entrepreneurial tradition, Buchanan saw an unmet need and filled it. He hired Annadel Wife, a former information-processing expert with the CIA, and the Carrollton Press began purchasing copies of declassified documents. These were summarized, indexed, reproduced on microfilm and offered initially to those libraries able to meet the stiff subscription rates. In 1977, documents declassified in a particular year, \$3950 for the 16,000 documents

Today, the Declassified Documents Reference System regularly scoops the major news and publishing media. In September 1977, for example, newspapers, wire services and magazines carried a story—gleaned from a new book, *Marina and Lee*—reporting that Lee Harvey Oswald had planned to kill Richard Nixon in Dallas months before Oswald assassinated President Kennedy. Subscribers to the Carrollton service knew about the Nixon threat a full year before it came out in the popular press. The story appeared among 325 Oswald-related documents which the Carrollton Press had legally obtained from government files.

In the spring of 1978, *Legend: The Secret Life of Lee Harvey Oswald*, a heavily promoted book by Edward Jay Epstein, shed new light on Oswald's life in the Soviet Union. The information was not news, however, to Carrollton subscribers who had read about Oswald's Russian sojourn 18 months before the book came out.

The Carrollton report included a verbatim transcript of the diary Oswald kept, poor spelling and all. An Oct. 21, 1959, entry, for example, gives Oswald's reaction upon being denied Soviet citizenship: "I decided to end it. Soak ristin cold water to numb the pain. Than slash my left wrist. Than plang wrist into bathtub of hot water. . . . Somewhere, a violin plays, as I watch my life whirl away." Soviet officials found Oswald bleeding to death and rushed him to a hospital in time to save him. One can only speculate on the course of history had they arrived an hour later.

Subscribers to the Declassified Documents Reference System can also read of Oswald's bitterness when his proposal of marriage was rejected by Ella, a beautiful Russian Jew: "I realize she was never serious with me, but only exploited my being an American to get the envy of the other girls who consider me different from the Russian Boys. I am miserable!"

In July 1977, the Washington Post carried a headline: "CIA Papers Detail Secret Experiments on Behavior Control." Subscribers to the Carrollton

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would have on a meeting or a conference."

The report stated that "a very small dose" of LSD was placed in a bottle of Cointreau. One man who drank unwittingly from the bottle was Dr. Frank Olson, an Army civilian employee who thereafter went into a state of depression and, 10 days after the drug experiment, plunged to his death from a New York City hotel room.

Another Carrollton document reveals some CIA thinking at the time regarding the potential of drugs. "Some of the individuals in the agency had to know tremendous amounts of information, and if a way could be found to produce amnesias . . . after the individual left the agency—it would be a remarkable thing."

The Declassified Documents Reference System also scooped The New York Times as well as a number of other major dailies and television news departments on these former secrets: that U.S. forces stood ready in 1964 to back up a military coup against Brazil's civilian government; that the Soviet Union probably suffered several nuclear power plant accidents in the late 1950's and early 1960's; and that the U.S. Army Chemical Corps had had studies done to learn how synthetic marijuana might be mass-produced as a chemical warfare agent.

Some newspapers, to make sure that no potential news from the Declassified Documents Reference System slips past them, have become subscribers. These include such distant journalistic cousins as The New York Times and the National Enquirer.

Numerous foreign governments besides the Soviet Union are interested in the documents. In a letter postmarked "Peking," a Mr. Huang Fu-sheng, book buyer for the