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# American professionals abroad aid CIA

By Elaine Douglass

According to Director Stansfield Turner, the CIA depends heavily on Americans who travel abroad professionally as sources of information about foreign countries. This includes university professors and researchers.

Turner discussed the use of university and other professionals in a May 1978 letter to the President of Harvard University, Derek C. Bok. Harvard made the letter public in July.

In addition to expanding the CIA's eyes and ears, the use of professionals to gather intelligence abroad eliminates the problem for the CIA of developing credible disguises, or "cover," for regular CIA agents. Moreover, scientists can gain access, often penetrating access, in countries where other categories of visitors are restricted in travel, or barred altogether.

*The Tech* recently discussed these issues with Associate Professor of Earth Sciences Peter Molnar. Molnar, who is currently supervising field work in Afghanistan, indicated he would not cooperate in any CIA intelligence gathering. He agreed, however, that consideration of his field work could serve as a hypothetical example of how scientists might be useful to the CIA.

Molnar heads a project that collects seismological data in Afghanistan, and he and members of his research group have been stationed in areas of that country close to the Soviet Union.

A reputedly left-wing coup in Afghanistan in April has generated fears among some US government officials that Afghanistan might come under the sway of the USSR, and has heightened US interest in Afghanistan.

Members of Molnar's group have enjoyed relatively free access to Afghanistan, which they ar-

anged in part through French scientists.

In response to a question, Molnar commented that he could imagine his project as an example of one that could be used for CIA intelligence gathering, but he said it would be less than ideal for that purpose because the MIT scientific project is likely to be viewed with some suspicion by Afghan officials. "Since we are seismologists, the Afghan government may think we are recording Russian underground nuclear tests," Molnar said, "and for intelligence gathering it would be better for the CIA to rely on people who are a little less obvious than we are."

Molnar stated that members of his expedition might be in a position to gather intelligence. In response to various hypothetical intelligence missions posed by *The Tech*, Molnar agreed that the MIT scientists might be able to gauge the degree of support for the new government in the countryside. Scientists might, for example, be able to discover if the local people were armed, and whether they would be receptive to offers of arms from outside the country which they might use to oppose the new government or harass it in outlying provinces.

Molnar said that he has never been approached by the CIA in connection with the Afghan field work. He once was approached, however, in connection with a visit to MIT by Soviet scientists.

"After I received visits from S. A. Fedotov and P. I. Tokarev of the Institute of Vulcanology in Petropavlovsk in January 1977, a guy from the CIA called me."

"I met with him as a scientific experiment," Molnar said. "I wanted to see what a CIA agent would say. The agent wanted to know if the Russians had said anything about an electric generator in the Garm region of Tadjikistan."

"I was somewhat relieved," Molnar continued, "that I knew nothing about the generator, and I did not have to compromise myself either by concealing information or by serving as a spy."

Molnar said he discussed his contact with the CIA with a senior colleague well informed on China. The colleague was dismayed. Molnar recalled, and asked Molnar, "Don't you know that if you are debriefed by the CIA you'll never get permission from the Chinese government to do work in China?"

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