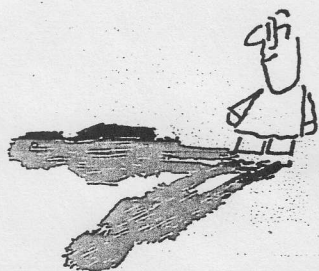

NOTES & TOPICS

Beyond the Veil

By Dan Pinck



ACCORDING to Bob Woodward, the assistant managing editor for the investigative staff of *The Washington Post* and a Pulitzer Prize winner for his Watergate exposures, the power élite in Washington has a limited vocabulary consisting largely of obscenities—or

perhaps Woodward hears four-letter words more often than he hears others. There is a veil over his latest book, *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987*.¹ Indeed, his reporting technique suggests that he wasn't present when the conversations he records took place and that his version of them relies heavily on his own limited vocabulary. Woodward reports episodes at which he couldn't possibly have been present. He notes at the beginning that he gained his knowledge from more than 250 undisclosed sources, most of whom express their most serious thoughts in atrocious obscenities. His language, and that of others, is so bad and so repetitive that one wonders how he knows what he claims to know.

The book follows, chronologically from beginning to end, the late William J. Casey's history and involvement with the Central Intelligence Agency and the Iran-Contra activities. The CIA is the United States's best-known and most-exposed intelligence agency. Casey was the Director of Central Intelligence from 1981 to 1987; he was, we may be certain, the control of the uncontrollable Lt. Col. Oliver North, who admits to deceiving the US Congress and many representatives of high government agencies. Anyone who displayed his flair for incompetence as an international trader would have been summarily fired before he became a national, off-the-shelf phenomenon.

Although the following conversations are taken out of context, they do illuminate what the context of *Veil* is. Parental guidance is suggested before reading these statements of the power élite:

"Senator William Cohen: 'Barry, what the fuck is this?'

Senator Barry Goldwater: '... find out what the fuck's going on. ... I've pulled his nuts out of the fire often enough.'

William J. Casey: 'He's the last fucker that will get that job.'

Prince Bandar (Saudi Ambassador): 'Tell him to go fuck himself.'

Secretary of State George Shultz: 'Why don't we give him AIDS?'

CIA official Clair George: 'I don't know what the fuck to do. ... This is so fucking demoralizing! When Goldwater said he was pissed off, he carried the whole Senate.'

L. Anthony Motley (US Ambassador): 'McMahon had somehow caught Casey sucking cock!' ..."

And so on.

After separate piles of f-words, a-words, m-words, c-words, and s-words have been placed in critical frames of reference, it's worth a turn to learn how Woodward further uses anonymous reporting from undisclosed sources. His verisimilar reporting suggests an intimacy on his part that demands verification. "The flames were flickering in the Oval Office fireplace. ..." It is a homey description; but how does Woodward know this if he wasn't in the President's office? Did he have a mole inside the White House reporting on the state of the fireplace that day? Who knows? For an answer, we must depend on one of the 250 undisclosed sources. Did President Reagan report this to Woodward? I doubt it; even Reagan's literary taste is higher than this epiphany of Woodward's: "The President's eyes flashed and his jaw set." Ouch. If we can renounce our critical faculties, we might believe that we are there, witnessing the jaw setting.

Woodward *sleuths* (he uses the noun *source* as a verb, so I'll adopt his misuse of language) into bedrooms, offices and limousines.

"The alarm woke the Director of Central Intelligence Stansfield Turner. He hated getting up in the morning, and he had set the alarm for the last possible minute—7 a.m.—this Thursday, November 20, 1980. ... After a shower, Turner dressed and sat down to read for a few minutes. He picked up the weekly Christian Science lesson. If he didn't pause now, there would be no other opportunity during the day. He liked to think that his was the intellectual branch of Christianity—the mind and the spirit over all else. ... At the breakfast table, he drank juice and hot water with lemon. Christian Science meant no stimulants, no coffee. Turner didn't even like the taste of coffee ice cream."

How did Woodward discover this intimate information; was Woodward hiding in Turner's bedroom that particular morning? Was Turner another mole of Woodward's, spying on himself? Who knows?

A CURSORY, freeze-frame look at the index of the book reveals a 30-page cornucopia of well-known persons. There are nineteen items listed under Turner, Stansfield—Casey's predecessor at the CIA. The index is a Washington name-dropper's reference of involvement and research; yet there is no substantial evidence in the book to confirm the involvement of anyone. Roger Rabbit is not listed; but he may have been lurking about, taking notes. President George Bush, who was the Director of the CIA from 1976 to early 1977, has

¹ *Veil: The Secret Wars of the CIA 1981-1987*. By BOB WOODWARD. Simon & Schuster, \$21.95, £14.95.

fifteen references in the index. Reagan told Bush, "Don't trust the CIA". This, it turns out, was excellent advice. Woodward lists himself in the index, with fifteen items. All of them need corroboration; yet there is none. The book's index is neither a map nor a guide; it may offer Woodward, Bob plausible deniability to those who do not care to have the evidence confirmed and who care not a whit about the truth.

Woodward is intensely interested in interiors, clothing, fireplaces, and the like. When he admits to being present at a meeting, we might be willing to give him the benefit of the doubt. When CIA Deputy Director Max Hugel visits the boardroom on the eighth floor of *The Washington Post*, Woodward reports: "Hugel, five foot five, wore a conservative chocolate-brown pinstriped suit, a plain tie and a shirt with small light, subdued dots. His smile was warm." Now there's an example of great investigative reporting. Woodward, Bob, reports that he "had more than four dozen interviews or substantive discussions with Casey from 1983 to 1987". Whether the following observation is part of an interview or a substantive discussion, we don't know. "The Director wore a well-tailored conservative blue suit. His shirt was perfectly pressed, the collar stiff and the tie clearly expensive." Subsequently, at another interview or substantive discussion, Woodward describes Casey's reaction to a question: "He stared hard, his dentures full of peanuts."

Woodward attempts to get off the hook in a prefatory admonition at the beginning of his book: "The use of dialogue in meetings or conversations comes from at least one participant or written memos or contemporaneous notes." It is hard to believe that. His accounts indicate an appalling sameness in the vulgar and obscene language. There is no controlling judgment in *Veil*. Even the most ravaging of reporters would be aghast at Woodward's descriptions. We learn nothing about the Iran-Contra affair; but we do learn just how impoverished Woodward's writing is. I don't believe many officials in Washington are deep thinkers, but I know that their swearing is more imaginative than that displayed in *Veil*. Recombinant minglings of fiction and fact have become a new form of writing contemporary history. Accuracy is irrelevant. Woodward has produced a cartoon slice of history, no more and a lot less, and he demonstrates this art form in pristine purity.

If the US Government had an Official Secrets Act, it would be in hot pursuit of Bob Woodward and his 250 undisclosed

sources. The CIA often goes to court to prevent former agents from publishing any material critical of the Agency and its activities. The mounting plethora of books by spies and ex-spies suggests the impossibility of maintaining secret information. *Spycatcher*,² in my opinion as poorly written as *Veil*, is the object of the British Government's Official Secrets Act and its new Bill. The result of Government intervention has been to make a bestseller out of a mediocre book. For the British Government to mount a prosecution over the "foreign" leak of information in *Spycatcher*, it would have to prove that it harmed the interests of the United Kingdom abroad. This should not be too difficult; nor should it be difficult to show that *Veil* harms the American Government abroad. My evidence might not stand in a court of law, but it is damning evidence. *Veil* harms the United States because the writing is so abominable: readers in other nations will believe that Americans can neither read with critical intelligence (it has been a bestseller in the United States) nor write with any skill and appreciation of the English language. The same applies to *Spycatcher*.

ON BOTH SIDES of the Atlantic, there is an insatiable interest in books about Intelligence operations and behind-the-lines spying. The interest is just as great in books that reveal moles within our nations' Intelligence agencies as it is in our agents in the USSR's KGB. The more dense and unfathomable the action or plot, the greater the interest. OSS, SOS, CIA, NSA, SOE, SAS, MI6, DIA, NFIB, NID, SNIE, COIC, MI5, NEC, KGB, GRU, Operation Silver, "C", DCI, NSC, OCI, 5G44, PFIAB, ChiNat, CIG, CHAOS, CORDS, Q-2, OSO, ONE, UVO, ONI, CIG, SIS, TSS, Project Artichoke, BNDD, COMOR, ISOS, EM-D, ACAS, PRO, JIC, SGM, "K", RSS, ARCOS, Section IX, "Quex", DO, INR, NSDD, SCI, SIGINT, GCHQ, 14K Triad, CSO, SCF, FCO, DPP, SD, F Section, DIS, Mossad, R5, and a thousand more of the alphabets of alleged covert and overt Intelligence operations feed hundreds of books—fact and fiction—about secret derring-do at home and abroad. Moles and super-moles, double-agents and triple-agents, dour men and adventurous women are mixed in stories so complex and convoluted that you seldom know who is spying on whom, who represents reality and who unreality. And after you have become immersed in their machinations you forget to ask yourself why. Smiley's Registry itself passes for a model of rational simplicity after delving into the mindless literature of spying. The subject of truth is irrelevant; entertainment is the key to the cryptography of our continuing interest.

Veil is an unwittingly amateurish attempt to unravel the monstrously eccentric skeins of leadership in the White House and the Central Intelligence Agency during the Iran-Contra affair. Motivated primarily by an itch to stop Communism from expanding in South and Central America (recall that the US Ambassador to the United Nations, Jeane Kirkpatrick, advocated supporting the Argentine Government and not Britain during the Falklands War), the major players in Iran-Contra

² Peter Wright, *Spycatcher* (Heinemann, Australia, 1987).

RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

Leading academics

RESEARCH ASSISTANTS

Experienced honours graduates

TRANSLATORS

Qualified, most European languages

ARCHIVISTS

Editing and indexing by word processor

Research Assistance Routledge Associates
4 Lauriston Road, London SW19 4TQ
Phone 01-947 9375

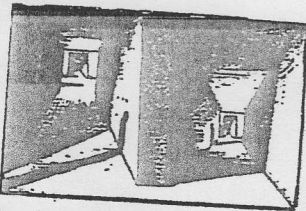
believed that the diversion of a few million dollars from the sale of missiles to Iran to the so-called freedom-fighters in Nicaragua would significantly help to keep Communism from spreading in this hemisphere. Ambassador Kirkpatrick believed that a Communist government would take over Argentina if the British won the Falklands. From this balderdash, it easily follows that President Reagan and his retinue may have tried to plot the overthrow of the Sandinistas.

As in a Jacobean pageant, the characters pass in review during Iran-Contra. Beginning with Ronald Reagan, they read like characters in novels by Eric Ambler and Dashiell

Hammett: Adnan Khashoggi, Manucher Ghorbanifar, Roy Furmark, Oliver North, Prince Bandar, Husein Mussabi, John Poindexter, Robert McFarlane, John Shaheen, Eugene Hasenfus, Angelo Codevilla, Michael Ledeen, Richard Secord, Constantine Menges, Eden Pastore, Adolfo Calero, David Kimche—each is unveiled in Woodward's insider prose and each is uncovered (or covered) in his role.

Who does know? Woodward knows: he lets the tape run, providing us with reels of unconfirmed data which we are supposed to believe. We believe at our peril. It will take years of undercover work by reputable historians to discover the germane factors in the creation of Iran-Contra. Maybe the

School for Spy-Writing



AN AMERICAN COMMENTATOR has recently laid down ground rules for fellow journalists who want to report on sex scandals involving politicians. The present spate of spy books suggests that some ground rules may also come in handy in this field of journalistic activity.

friendly ex-agents of the FBI will be glad to explain in detail how degenerate upper-class Britons betrayed honest, native-born Americans. It is best to pick FBI ex-agents of advanced years; those trained by Edgar Hoover were imbued with hostile attitudes towards all Britons, but especially those who worked for MI5 and MI6.

5. IN THE COURSE of these activities, our author should begin to describe himself as an historian. To improve this "cover", he should hire an expert to supply an index for his book, and add some notes. These latter need not give much trouble; it is safe to insert a few references to the Public Record Office—nobody will check them. Unsupported speculations can be attributed to "private sources", or to some earlier hack who worked similar territory.

6. THE NEXT STAGE is the trickiest: to secure maximum publicity, it is desirable to induce some expression of disapproval on the part of the government, without actually provoking an injunction against the publisher of the book. Use of the D-Notice procedure is recommended for this purpose. As it is not operated very rigorously, there is a risk that no objection to the text will be raised and no outcry will be generated. To avoid this set-back, it may be necessary to go over the top—by speculating, for example, that at a given period the Director-General of one of the Secret Services and all but one of his senior Directors were working for the KGB. If this seems exaggerated, our author can always cite the classic case of the Communist Party cell in the States which was so deeply penetrated by the FBI that in the end all but one of its members proved to be under-cover agents of the FBI.

7. FINALLY, a word about handling fellow media men. The first essential is to insist that our new author, who has now graduated as an historian, is not interested in making money, or even in paying off old scores, but is acting solely in the public interest with one or more of the following objectives: a) to purge the Secret Services (despite the fact that the victim and his dubious colleagues have been dead for many years); b) to bring about the reform of the Official Secrets Act (although, if it were repealed, real historians would enter the field); c) to bring down the government, or at least provoke a debate in Parliament and so maximise publicity.

Secondly, our author must stress that he has revealed in this first volume only "the tip of the iceberg", implying that he knows more suspects than he has named. This leaves the way open for another book, which can be suitably entitled *Son of Spook, More Molehills, or Double Double-Agent Trouble*.

Robert Cecil

1. OUR BUDDING AUTHOR must first select an upper-class Briton formerly connected with MI5 or MI6 (hereinafter to be referred to as "the victim"). To avoid libel actions, the victim must be dead. A British victim is highly desirable because of the American market. American cognoscenti firmly believe that only upper-class Britons are both sex-deviants and dedicated Marxists; it is unwise to trifle with these beliefs. There have been, of course, many more American spies; but most of these have been of humble origin and have worked for money (like the rest of us). They tend also to have foreign names, which means (for Anglo-Saxons) that they were incapable of loyalty and are therefore uninteresting as traitors.

2. HAVING CHOSEN his victim, our author needs an "inside" source, who once had some connection with MI5 or MI6. It is best to look for someone who retired on a very small pension or was only awarded the MBE after 40 years of devoted service. If it transpires that most of these are already under contract, it is usually safe to build up the importance of a janitor or liftman as a source; indeed, the gossip provided by the humbler sources sometimes turns out to be more highly spiced. A semi-literate source is also less likely to succumb to the temptation to write memoirs before emigrating.

3. AT THIS STAGE it is essential to visit Washington to find out what FBI documents about the British spy scene have been released under the Freedom of Information Act. Some of the British names in these documents will have been blacked out; but this is no real obstacle. In fact it can prove helpful, as it allows our author to substitute names that fit his conspiracy theory. For this reason he would be well advised, in selecting his victim, to eschew unusually long names, such as Throckmorton or Cholmondeley, despite their having the right aristocratic overtones.

4. IF OUR AUTHOR finds the FBI archives disappointing, or examining microfilm gives him a crick in the neck, he will find bars in Washington where, for the price of a few drinks,

excuses for the amateurishness of the operation can be delineated only in four-letter words.

The British Government would impound the book and the author if *Veil* had been written by a British reporter about covert operations undertaken by British agencies. The mere reporting of what the head of Intelligence liked to drink for breakfast would be punishable; and the person who may have given the writer this information—even the head of Intelligence—would be equally guilty. Of course, Whitehall would have to show that the divulging of such information could be useful to an enemy. This might be hard to do, although the writer could be accused of violating the Official Secrets Act. In the United States, however, anything goes.

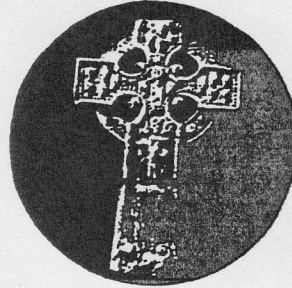
SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I was invited to a two-day meeting of old CENSORED who had been active in secret intelligence work since World War II. The then head of the Central Intelligence Agency, William J. Casey, and two former directors, William E. Colby and Richard Helms, as well as a former Deputy Director, Ray Cline, were among the 80 or so guests who vied with one another in telling the most appropriate and sometimes outlandish tales of adventure 30 and 40 years ago. The participants, so we were advised in our invitation, were all members of the old-boy network of Intelligence operatives. Much to my surprise and dismay, I recognised a journalist who had built a lucrative career exposing wrongdoing in Washington, and who had never been a member of this old-boy network; the man was Bob Woodward. His presence mystified me. I decided to try to find out what he was doing. Woodward was talking to Colby. I walked over to them and listened. They were talking about the new office building at the CIA's headquarters in Langley, Virginia; then they talked about Nathan Hale's statue outside the Director's office. (Nathan Hale said, the moment before he was hanged, "Give me liberty or give me death".) When their conversation lulled, I said, "Woodward, what are you doing here?" He said, without looking directly at me, "I'm writing a biography of Bill Casey".

It was odd that Casey allowed Woodward to write about him. I couldn't fathom Casey's reasoning and I didn't try. It was mysterious; but then many things the CIA do are mysterious. After the publication of *Veil*, I surmised that Casey had many ulterior motives, chief among them the desire to perplex the Russians. There is so much unclassified information about clandestine operations and technical innovations that the Russians must feel they have to analyse all of it. There must be 10,000 Russians reading information about American covert operations and trying to make useful interpretations. It's an impossible task in the United States; it's got to be impossible for the Russians. With more and more books, we might overload their system. Several former directors of the CIA have written books. Are there any secrets? Is everyone in the CIA? If the United States had an Official Secrets Act, then the entire CIA would be impounded.

My assumption is that the CIA is an infertile cover for Intelligence operations and that the actual directors of American Intelligence are located in the kitchens of a tandoori in Ealing and a Chinese restaurant in San Francisco.

Burke's Ireland

By Max Beloff



IT CAN NEVER be useless to read Edmund Burke. In a range of sympathies and in the capacity to place political questions of the moment within the perspective of centuries and of continents, he remains the master. And in an age when political debate has cheapened into the patter of the admen, it is good to be

reminded of the sonorities of which the English language was capable a mere 200 years ago. Ireland's problems are, alas, always with us. Yet I am a little puzzled by the present republication of Burke's comments upon them.¹

As one is reminded by Conor Cruise O'Brien, in an introduction done with his usual verve, this collection has not been made with a view to the present-day reader. It is a reprint of a collection of Burke's public writings, with a few private letters on the same topics, made by Matthew Arnold in connection with the renewed attention paid to Irish questions at the time of the Home Rule controversy in 1881. It may be that readers at that time, 100 years closer to the events, were more familiar with them—could place every allusion of Burke's to some particular occasion, and identify the statesmen and others to whom he rarely gives an actual name. It is certain that they would have found it easier to take aboard the classical quotations which were then part and parcel of House of Commons debates. If this material needed to be called to our attention in popular form—Burke scholars are otherwise provided for—it would surely have been desirable to provide enough annotation to help understand the text. It would not have been a vast effort, and it would have made the volume more acceptable.

Furthermore, as Conor Cruise O'Brien makes clear, the Irish affairs which were the objects of Burke's concern are not those of today, though they continue to have their repercussions on what has now become both sides of the border in a (then unthinkable) partitioned country. In dealing with Ireland, as with other political issues, Conor Cruise O'Brien makes much of the dividing line brought about in Burke's thinking by the French Revolution. Indeed, his one suggestion in dealing with Matthew Arnold's editing is to suggest that a letter written in this later phase should be read in its chronological place and not where Arnold put it. Before 1782, Burke was chiefly concerned to plead for the abolition of the worst aspects of the penal laws and to try to bring about, if not an equality for the majority Roman Catholic community, then

¹ *Irish Affairs*. By EDMUND BURKE. Edited by MATTHEW ARNOLD, with a new introduction by CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN. The Cresset Library (Hutchinson), £6.95.