

## CIA Press Network Frantic Over Colson Charges

NEW YORK July 20 (IPS)—Almost a month ago the *Washington Star-News* of June 23 first revealed the contents of conversations between former Nixon aide Charles Colson and Washington private investigator Richard L. Bast, in which Colson charged that the whole Watergate operation was a plot of the Central Intelligence Agency to “get Nixon.” Shortly thereafter Colson’s charges were reinforced by Senator Howard Baker’s special report on CIA involvement in Watergate, which was finally made public over CIA cavils the morning of July 2. No serious analysis of these developments has been available in any news source except *New Solidarity* and IPS. An examination of the hysterical reaction of leading Rockefeller press organs following the Colson “leak” completely confirms the assessment of the special IPS report on “The Shaping of Journalism by Psychological Warfare” [IPS No. 6].

### New York Times Retails CIA Line On Colson

June 24, the same day that the *Washington Post*, *New York Post*, and *Boston Globe* carried extremely diluted versions of the previous day’s *Star-News* Colson story, Rockefeller’s *New York Times* announced the official CIA line on Colson. While blacking out the Colson-Bast conversations totally in that issue, the *Times* pictured Colson as a religious zealot, a Jesus Freak, whose “words sound **unreal**” [emphasis added]. The aura of “unreality” thus built up around Colson’s conversion to evangelical Christianity is designed to make “unreal”-sounding Colson’s stated personal commitment to tell the truth.

### Press Reels At Colson Bombshell

The *Star-News* article by reporter Robert Walters was a bombshell. (Controlling interest in that newspaper has since been purchased by a “liberal” anti-Nixon Texas banker!) Immediately, the CIA moved to cover its tracks, with the *New York Times* carrying an unsigned article buried on page 24 of its June 25 late edition which misquoted Colson and brushed aside his charges. While no mention is made in that article of Colson’s statement, previously carried in the *Star-News* piece, that the CIA “enjoys extensive influence with the news media (particularly the *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Los Angeles Times*),” the central paragraph of the *Times* article states: “The *New York Times*, in an inquiry conducted last month, was unable to confirm that the C.I.A. had played a role in the planning of the Ellsberg burglary and Watergate break-in, as Mr. Colson is known to believe.”

The same day (June 25) CIA leaker Jack Anderson’s syndicated column added to the planned confusion. Titled “New CIA Watergate Link,” the column is simply

a diversion. Anderson reports that “CIA front man Robert Bennett... has conceded that he knew a **White House burglary-bugging team** was on the prowl in advance of the celebrated Watergate break-in” [emphasis added]. Referring to a “secret memorandum,” Anderson is compelled in the wake of the Colson revelations to speak of “mysterious CIA involvement,” while firmly placing the blame for the operation on Nixon’s White House staff. This is the “new CIA Watergate link”? Where is Colson?

Not until Colson had already begun serving his federal prison term did Anderson give a nod to the Colson revelations. His July 16 column (“The CIA Threat”) dissolves the original story down to a pathetic farce. The “CIA threat,” Anderson says, has nothing to do with a plot to overthrow Nixon and constitutional government; it is merely a “threat” to reveal more scandal about Nixon campaign financing. Anderson’s finishing touch: “CIA sources said the Colson campaign funds charge is ‘baseless’.”

Other printed fallout from the Colson bombshell has included the writings of CIA press agents Evans and Novack; a piece of quackery by William F. Buckley, Jr.; and a cautious and carefully twisted version of the Baker report in *Time* magazine.

Evans and Novack in their June 26 column were obviously shaken: “Colson’s bizarre charges,” they declare, “tying the CIA to Watergate dust off old and almost discredited accusations”; and “Colson’s accusations of sinister CIA participation in Watergate [are] charges long since written off as groundless by a House investigation.” Buckley (*New York Post*, July 11), while offering to “shed a little light,” mutters that “the CIA is full of factions”; “nobody knows what to think.” He pretends to chide CIA liberals like Joseph Kraft who don’t go along with his public pose of viewing Daniel Ellsberg as a Russian agent.

July 15 *Time* magazine responded to both the Colson charges and the Baker report with the carefully developed CIA line that the CIA was involved, yes, but it was the victim of White House manipulation. It is “dismaying,” says *Time* of the Baker report, “because it shows how easily some CIA employees were drawn into the scandal and, with too few questions asked, gave aid to the lawbreakers and cooperated with dubious White House requests. In the process,” *Time* concludes, “the CIA was tarnished.”

### “Alternate Press” Adds Its Voice

Nothing to date matches the effort of Terence Sheridan in the July 26 issue of *New Times*, a countercultural “Weimar” publication controlled by

CIA agent/journalists Pete Hamill, J. Anthony Lukas, and Nicholas von Hoffman.

Sheridan's six-page spread echoes the *New York Times* line that Colson is a religious fanatic, a "magic Christian," who they are happy to report will be spending a good deal of time in prison: "*Nine days before the former special counsel to the President is to be locked up, I'm watching miniscule air bubbles escape from the corner of his rigidly placed smile. I'm trying to determine whether the smile is beatific or goofy.... Maybe. I think, uncontrolled New Testament shock treatments, red-hot jolts of Ephesians, Corinthians, Romans, Revelations and John damaged his brain while bringing him to his knees in the incredible conversion to evangelical Christianity.*"

Following four pages of these musings comes a box with a picture of E. Howard Hunt entitled "Colson's Complaint." Here the reader finds the reason for the preceding four pages of hysterical ramblings. Colson's charges of CIA responsibility for Watergate and involvement of CIA agents in the press in the Watergate conspiracy are culled from the taped conversations made available by Richard Bast. *New Times* accuses Colson of trying to save his own neck by attempting to "plant self-serving conspiracy theories to rival the most paranoid ravings of the CIA-crazed National Labor Caucus (sic)." No further mention is made of the "paranoid ravings" of the National Caucus of Labor Committees, publishers of *New Solidarity* and IPS—taking for granted that the reader is familiar with the Labor Committees' exposure of CIA operations, including the Watergate conspiracy.

#### **Press Reacts to Labor Committee Documentation**

CIA journalists are especially agitated because the Colson revelations have added weight to the Labor Committee/IPS exposure of the CIA **as it relates particularly to the role played by agents in the press.** In response, therefore, *New Times* is quick to defend agents Bob Woodward of the *Washington Post* and Seymour Hersh of the *New York Times*. According to *New Times*, the Colson-Bast tapes include statements by Colson charging that both Woodward and Hersh are CIA operatives, although Colson believes they acted unconsciously. Therefore, Colson is quoted as saying, they are now subject to CIA "blackmail" to keep them from divulging the fact that all their Watergate stories were given to them by the CIA.

From interviews with numerous journalists who wish to remain anonymous, IPS has learned that not only are Woodward, Bernstein, Hersh, and others CIA agents, but they are fully conscious of their role. An American journalist closely associated with the Hersh-Obst-Kopkind circle has told IPS that "*Of course Hersh knows what he is doing. He's in it for the money; so's Woodward. These guys are not so naive as to think that they are really doing a public service. They know they work for the CIA.*"

In the few days immediately after the June 23 *Star-News* disclosures, IPS received numbers of calls from New York journalists who said that they now saw the whole Watergate saga in a different light. "This certainly bears out your January analysis" was a typical comment.

In an attempt to gauge journalists' reactions to the Colson developments, IPS made a series of phone calls to *New York Times* bureaus and to CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. When IPS tried to contact Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein at the *Washington Post*, our reporter was told that they were "unavailable... out peddling their book." (Woodward and Bernstein have received \$500,000 each for their book *All the President's Men* and \$2 million for the film rights.)

A *New York Times* deskman told IPS that Bob Slosser, author of the June 24 "crazy Christian zealot" piece, was "not available... he's ill."

#### **Hersh: "I'm An Agent"**

*New York Times* writer Seymour Hersh told an IPS Washington correspondent June 24 that he had had access to the Colson story, but had decided to kill it. When asked why, Hersh shouted repeatedly: "There's not a shred of evidence, not a shred of truth." He went on to admit that his proven method for determining "truth" and "evidence" is "that which feels right to my instincts." After revealing his criteria, Hersh began to worry: "Who are you? Oh my God—it's the NCLC! Okay—I'm an agent. I'm an agent. I'm an agent!"

IPS reached CIA Assistant Director Thuermer by phone at CIA headquarters and asked for a CIA press statement on the *Star-News* and *Washington Post* reports of the Colson-Bast exchange. Thuermer found it inadvisable to formulate a statement: "Statement? Statement? Oh, you mean a **statement**. Oh yes, I'm an ex-AP man myself!"