
their own choices. If the collective result of their choices is less than mathematical parity with men, that may be intolerable to radical

feminists at war with the patriarchy—but to everyone else, female as well as male, it will be just fine.

PRESS & MEDIA

Stranger than Fiction

A Survey of Recent Articles

During the Cold War, some U.S. journalists worked themselves into a lather over the fact that patriotic colleagues had given assistance of various sorts to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). In a lengthy article in *Rolling Stone* (Oct. 20, 1977), reporter Carl Bernstein of Watergate fame claimed that over the preceding quarter-century, more than 400 American journalists had “secretly carried out assignments” for the CIA—and journalists, he seemed to take for granted, should not in any way be helping an intelligence agency, even their own government’s. Commenting in the *Washington Post* (Sept. 18, 1977), columnist George Will saw nothing wrong with much of the cooperation that had taken place between journalists and the CIA, but agreed that no reporter should be a paid agent.

Three years later, when foreign correspondents Arnaud de Borchgrave and Robert Moss’s *The Spike* appeared, a novel about Soviet efforts to influence the Western media, it was dismissed by many journalists as a far-fetched tale, an outgrowth of conservative, anticommunist paranoia.

Now, with the Cold War over, comes the reluctant admission by an eminent journalist at the *Guardian*, London’s highly regarded left-of-center newspaper, that he had taken money from the Soviet KGB—and, incredibly, the scandal is shrugged off in many journalistic quarters. “Holdover Sniping From Cold War Claims a Victim” is the headline over the *New York Times* (Jan. 8, 1995) story about the affair, with the poor “victim” being the *Guardian* journalist himself, Richard Gott.

“Given the *Times*’ remarkably incurious response to this journalistic scandal,” the *New Criterion*’s Hilton Kramer comments in the *New York Post* (Jan. 17, 1995), “one naturally wonders

how the paper would respond if, as more information about the KGB’s penetration of the Western press comes to light, it was discovered that one of its own correspondents had been enlisted in the service of the Soviet Union.”

Richard Gott’s work for the KGB was brought to light by London’s conservative *Spectator* (Dec. 10, 1994), in an article by Alasdair Palmer. He notes that the 56-year-old Gott—who had been an editorial writer, foreign correspondent, features editor, and, finally, literary editor of the *Guardian*—had made no secret of his communist sympathies. Indeed, Palmer writes, Gott had spent his long career “fulminating against the evils of international capitalism and attempting to airbrush out the faults of Soviet communism.”

But Gott had made a secret of his employment by the Soviet espionage organization. The *Spectator* says he was recruited by the KGB in the late 1970s. “Richard Gott committed no legal offense in meeting and talking with the KGB,” Palmer writes. But in taking money from that organization, he adds, Gott betrayed his readers’ trust “in the most fundamental way possible.”

The *Spectator*’s exposé prompted Gott to resign from the *Guardian* (Dec. 9, 1994), with a lighthearted admission of having taken—in an “essentially harmless saga”—what he calls “red gold” from the KGB to pay for trips to Vienna, Athens, and Nicosia “to meet their man.” His letter of resignation appears under the jaunty headline: “I was a mellow traveler.” The *Guardian*’s editor, Peter Preston, accepted the resignation in the same spirit, lauding Gott as “a free spirit and a brilliant journalist who has served the *Guardian* long and well,” and joking that “if the Russians thought of recruiting

Triumph of the Bland

The old-fashioned city editor—that grumpy tyrant who knew his city like the back of his hand (but who did not always set aside his prejudices about the people who lived in it)—is disappearing, part of a cultural and economic transformation of the news business. Carl Sessions Stepp, a senior editor at the *American Journalism Review* (Dec. 1994), casts an eye over the new landscape.

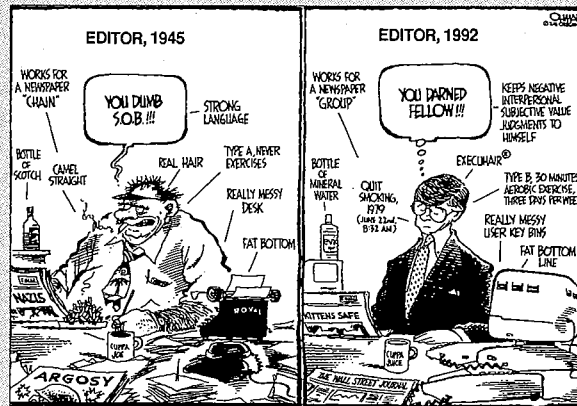
They're dying away now, almost extinct, a Neanderthal league of the politically incorrect, a dwindling herd of inky-fingered, whiskey-breathed, tyrannosaurus wrecks, edged aside by the Suits and the Slashes, the Assistant Managing Editor/ Locals, manicured managers for modern times.

Once they were kings.

The title resounded with glory. City editors bestrode the newsroom with the supremacy of Zeus and the swagger of Civil War generals. Hardened journalists cringed at their lacerating sarcasm, but a city editor's wink could render the coldest-blooded writer sniffling.

Stanley Walker of the New York Herald Tribune, perhaps the most famous of them all, captured the legend this way in his book City Editor:

He invents strange devices for the torture of reporters, this mythical agate-eyed Torquemada with the paste-pots and scissors. Even his laugh, usually directed at something sacred, is part sneer. His terrible curses cause flowers to wither, as the grass died under the hoofbeats of the horse of Attila the Hun. A chilly, monstrous figure, sleepless, nerveless, and facing with ribald mockery the certain hell which awaits him.



Yet looking back, journalists tend to remember them fondly, to miss their incendiary personalities. For all their pitiless bluster, old-line city editors were leaders and teachers, immovably loyal and unforgettably inspiring, and consumed constantly with mad, delirious pursuit of the latest three-alarm news story. . . .

Today's typical city editor is better trained, more rounded and surrounded by more assistants, more the "New World editor" than the "Cro-Magnon city editor," according to Jeff Cowart, who runs American Press Institute seminars for city editors. Most serve for only two or three years, Cowart says, seldom long enough to develop the encyclopedic community consciousness and street-smart craftiness of many old-timers.

you . . . no wonder they lost the Cold War."

William Shawcross, the liberal author of *Side-show: Kissinger, Nixon and the Destruction of Cambodia* (1979), is not amused. Writing in the *Times* of London (Dec. 16, 1994), he declares: "Gott's taking what he calls 'red gold' was not a joke, but treachery—against his profession, his col-

leagues, his readers, and, above all, those millions of defenseless people around the world whose interests he purported to defend. Gott took money from a regime which has murdered more millions of people than any other in history. Whatever his particular sense of humor, that is hardly a joke."