

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

29 JUN 1977

Noel Field

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation

ATTENTION : [REDACTED]
Intelligence Division

SUBJECT : Revelations of Karel Kaplan

1. With reference to your memorandum of 19 May 1977 entitled "Karel Kaplan, Internal Security - Czechoslovakia" and the memorandum [REDACTED] entitled "Reports on Noel Field and the Rosenbergs", the attached items are being forwarded for your information.

2. When the other articles from the Italian periodical Panorama become available they too will be forwarded.

FOR THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR OPERATIONS:

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Attachments:
As stated above.

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Att. to:

Part II. And I Saw a Name: Rosenberg

[3 May 1977, pp 169-191]

A file in the Prague archives on Julius Rosenberg, executed in the United States in 1953 for espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. It had been gathered in 1947. "A remarkable revelation," say two American historians who dealt with the Rosenberg case.

"The matter is extremely delicate. It lends itself too readily to manipulation of every sort. And besides, it's not in my field. I am a specialist in Czech history, and I can tell what I know about the history of the communist movement, but I know nothing about American history."

This was the first response of historian and Czech communist leader Karel Kaplan (PANORAMA's No 575 carried the first instalment of Kaplan's recollections on Stalin and his decision to start a war in Europe), when, during one of many conversations in his little apartment in Munich, where he now lives with his wife, Vilma, the name Rosenberg came up.

It was the PANORAMA correspondent who first mentioned the name of the American couple, both committed communists, who were sentenced to death in 1953 for atomic espionage on behalf of the Soviet Union. There was talk of the political trials in Czechoslovakia during the years from 1948 to 1954, during the Stalinist era, and the Rosenbergs were cited as an example of political trials on the other side of the wall. "Maybe there is something in the Prague archives that relates to this case," said Kaplan, who knows those archives as no one else can. He is in fact one of the very few people -- five or six in all -- who had free access to those files for a whole year, from April 1968 to April 1969. What does Kaplan know about the Rosenberg case? It was not easy to get him to tell.

Karel Kaplan, 48, a historian with an international reputation and a Party official from 1948 to 1968, then expelled like all of Dubcek's people, at the time of the Prague Spring was consultant for historical sciences to the Central Committee of the Czech CP, was, in that spring of 1968, given an assignment of extreme delicacy and enormous political importance to Czechoslovakia by his top superiors in the Party: to write the definitive history of the political trials, the story of how the dream of a socialist Czechoslovakia had been turned into tragedy.

Already thoroughly familiar with the history of the trials, in which he was concerned both as a historian and as a politician from 1963 onward, Kaplan found himself suddenly given complete

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freedom, along with his colleagues, to examine tens of thousands of potentially explosive documents, on which no one had ever before been permitted to lay hands. They contained damaging evidence not only against Czech leaders like former President Klement Gottwald and his son-in-law, former Defense Minister Alexej Cepicka, but laid serious charges against the Soviet Union itself.

"The name of Rosenberg was one of many that passed before my eyes," Kaplan says. But that was not what I was looking for. I paused for a moment because naturally I remembered what the Rosenberg case had meant to us, too," Kaplan recalls.

The answers Kaplan and his colleagues were looking for, gathered on 300 typewritten pages, never saw the light of day. The document, known as the Piller report (Jan Piller, a member of the Central Committee Presidium, was responsible for labor policy), has until now remained secret: in the West a condensed version of it was published, the only segments to slip through the meshes of the Party until now.

The Soviet invasion of August 1968 and Dubcek's replacement 8 months later with the present Party secretary general and President, Gustav Husak, was what prevented publication of the report. As PANORAMA readers could see for themselves from the historical essay in our last issue, both the Soviets and Czechs had good reasons to keep the report under wraps.

After much insistence, Kaplan agreed to a discussion of the Rosenberg case with two American professors invited to Munich by PANORAMA. They were David Kennedy of Stanford University in California, a specialist in 20th century American political history, and Allen Weinstein of Smith College, in Massachusetts, who brought suit to obtain most of the FBI files on the Rosenberg case and is now writing a book about it. The discussion took place in a Munich hotel on 27 March. In mid-April, Weinstein met with Kaplan again. Shortly thereafter some irresponsible leaks passed across the Atlantic and give an inaccurate picture of the information on the Rosenberg case in Karel Kaplan's possession.

PANORAMA: It may well be impossible to talk about the Rosenberg case without getting a bit emotional, pro or con. Believing or not believing in the innocence of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg is in fact more a matter of faith than of concrete legal proof. It was so, according to many of the scholars who have dealt with the matter, even for the judges who decided the fate of the two accused. "By your betrayal you have changed the course of history to the detriment of your country," said Judge Irving R. Kaufman from the bench where he presided over the court. These were high-sounding phrases, but, according to a lot of people, they only thinly cloaked a lack of solid facts on which to base the harsh sentence.

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KENNEDY: That's true. It was a highly political trial. You must keep in mind that American public opinion was strongly oriented, after the experience of war and victory, toward a return to the isolationism of the 'thirties. Let the rest of the world, particularly Europe, stew in its own juice, was the attitude of the average American during those years. President Harry Truman, Secretary of State George C. Marshall and his successor, Dean Acheson, decided on the contrary to take on a leading role in world politics. Hence you had, first of all, in 1947, the tough talk of the Truman Doctrine, astutely designed to scare the American electorate to death. Then there was the political manipulation of some court cases, those of Alger Hiss and the Rosenbergs above all, for political purposes. These were not trumped-up trials, but even so they helped awaken public opinion to what the group then running things in Washington then considered the communist peril.

KAPLAN: You might perhaps say that even in the United States there were those who played the political role created in Czechoslovakia by Public Prosecutor Josef Urvalek, the prosecuting attorney in the Rudolf Slansky trial.

KENNEDY: Certainly, even though the overall situation in the two countries was different. America, right after the war, experienced a brief period of euphoria. We had won. We had the atom bomb. We were the strongest of all, we were all-powerful.

Then in 1949 came the shock of the coup d'etat in Prague. And, before the year was out, the Russians exploded their first atom bomb, and only a little while later, in the spring of 1950, the Korean War broke out. The American dream of a lasting peace guaranteed by American omnipotence was shattered. The people were asking why and, as often happens, the easiest and most persuasive answer was: find the traitors. It was the old, old explanation of history as the doing of conspirators. Look for the traitors! And this soon became the warhorse of the Republicans, who were in the opposition at the time. That was how we got to McCarthyism and the charge of treason levelled against the entire Democratic Party, which had been in power for almost 20 uninterrupted years. The Rosenberg case has to be looked at in this context.

PANORAMA: After 26 years of impassioned debate between those who think the Rosenbergs were innocent and those who think they were guilty, do you know anything new about the Rosenberg case?

WEINSTEIN: Not much so far, since all the investigations have been concentrated, not on the case per se, but on the trial and on the very harsh sentence which was, to say the least, an obscenity. But almost nobody has dug into all the things that happened prior to the trial, or into how the FBI happened, in its

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hunt for spies who may have passed atomic secrets to the USSR, to pick on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg.

PANORAMA: Granted that the trial was heavily tainted by the prevailing political climate, there is still the troublesome unanswered question: were they guilty or were they innocent?

WEINSTEIN: No historian can make himself a judge and hand down a sentence. That is what the courts are for. The historian can and must investigate. And insofar as I am concerned I can say that nothing in all I have examined up to now, proves that the Rosenberg's were innocent.

PANORAMA: Are there additional pieces of evidence of guilt, besides those introduced at the trial?

WEINSTEIN: Incredible though it may seem, the FBI had evidence that would have been of great help to the prosecution, and did not use it. For example, a letter seized on 15 June 1950 in the house of David Greenglass and written by Greenglass's wife, Ruth, to Greenglass while he was working as a mechanic at the secret nuclear base at Los Alamos in New Mexico, where they build the bombs that were dropped on Japan.

Greenglass, a sergeant in the army, knew absolutely nothing as to what the pieces he was making under the direction of the scientists were to be used for, nor did he know the reason for all the secrecy that surrounded the base. It was his brother-in-law Julius Rosenberg who explained it to him: "Julie (that's what everybody in the family called him) was here and told me what you are probably working on," wrote Ruth Greenglass to her husband on 31 July 1944. Well, the prosecution would certainly have scored some heavy points by asking Julius Rosenberg how in the world he happened to know, in 1944, a secret no other American knew, with the exception of a few dozen people in Washington.

PANORAMA: Why in the world wasn't the letter produced and placed in evidence by the prosecution?

WEINSTEIN: That is one of the many mysteries surrounding the Rosenberg case. I think I shall explain it in my book. I'd like to ask Professor Kaplan now if he has anything to tell us. After all, we are in the same boat: I have had access to hitherto secret documents through a lawsuit under American law, and he has had the same kind of access thanks to the particular straits in which his country found itself in 1958.

PANORAMA: Professor Kaplan, I know that you don't like to talk about this matter. But you must be aware of the historical importance of your testimony. Up until now, in fact, all information about the Rosenberg case has come from American, or at least from Western sources.

KAPLAN: As I have already said, the Rosenberg case is very delicate, it is not my specialty, and what I know about it I learnt by chance. Anyway, there is in the archives of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in Prague a file on Julius Rosenberg, set up prior to 1950. The file is in a folder which contains notes and details relating to an intelligence network set up by the Czech secret services in the United States in 1947.

PANORAMA: What does all that mean?

KAPLAN: I couldn't say for sure. I repeat, I was never directly concerned with the Rosenberg case, nor could I have foreseen happening onto that particular file during my research in 1968. However, since I was interested in the intelligence network set up by the Prague secret services in the United States (I was looking into it in connection with the Field case, which was indeed of great importance in shedding broad daylight on the political trials), I can offer some theories.

The fact that this file exists may mean either that the Czechs were indeed in contact with Julius, or that they wanted to make contact with him. And here again it is impossible to make assertions based on guesswork.

PANORAMA: Rather than proof, what we have here are strong indications to support one point: Julius Rosenberg was known to the Prague secret services even before he became, following his arrest in July 1950, a protagonist in the dramas played out on the front pages of every newspaper in the world.

KAPLAN: Certainly, even though what is in the Prague archives does not constitute proof that Rosenberg was a spy for Czechoslovakia.

PANORAMA: At this point, though, there are some things to clear up. The Rosenbergs were found guilty on charges of spying for the USSR during the period when David Greenglass was at Los Alamos, that is, between 1944 and 1946. And at that time the SVAB intelligence agency was not yet active in the United States, since it was not founded until 1947. Furthermore, during the trial, in March of 1951, there was talk of contacts between Julius Rosenberg and Soviet diplomat Anatoly Yakovlev, but never any mention of Czech agents.

WEINSTEIN: Julius Rosenberg began passing information to the Soviets at the beginning of the war. Minor stuff, petty industrial espionage. It should be emphasized furthermore that the United States and the Soviet Union were allies then in a no-quarter war against nazism and fascism. And that Julius Rosenberg and his wife (Ethel's role in this whole business has yet to be cleared up), might perfectly well have felt that he was performing a quasi-legal action. The USSR then was in fact no longer merely the one country to have adopted the political ideology in which he believed, but was also committed to a herculean effort shoulder to shoulder with the United States.

And then, into the life of Julius Rosenberg, who was certainly not a spy on the level of Rudolf Abel, came a great event, one destined to change his existence totally, and tragically: by one of those imponderable and perhaps random decisions of military commands, his brother-in-law, David Greenglass, was sent to Los Alamos. Suddenly, in the eyes of his Soviet friends, Rosenberg became an important personage. Maybe he even thought so himself. Anyway, there is nothing to indicate that Julius, once the war was over, ceased his activities as an informer, and it is quite possible that he had contacts with Czech agents as well.

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PANORAMA: But why did the Soviets have to use Czechs after 1947? They had maintained direct contact for at least 4 years, so they could perfectly well have continued them.

KAPLAN: The entire system set up by the Czech secret service in the United States had, as one of its principal aims, to provide aid and support for the Soviet spy system. Czechoslovakia still had a coalition government, was still not a communist country, and so its diplomats were not nearly so closely watched, in the United States or elsewhere, as were the Soviets.

The Czech role may have been to stand in for their Soviet colleagues in making certain contacts, or to provide local agents with the funds required for operations. It was a collaboration between Prague and Moscow that went beyond the area of action of the intelligence services. Nor is it even certain that this collaboration was imposed by Moscow. Quite the contrary. For many Czechs during those years, it was what you might call a point of honor to help the Soviets in their battles on the international level.

WEINSTEIN: The contact between Julius Rosenberg and the Czech services in America explains one point in the Rosenberg affair that has hitherto been a mystery: why in the world, according to the testimony given at the trial by David Greenglass, would Julius Rosenberg have told his brother-in-law, in May 1950, to flee to Mexico and from there, after a stopover in Switzerland or Sweden, to head for Czechoslovakia? In Prague, according to his testimony at the trial, Greenglass was to get in touch with the Soviet ambassador.

PANORAMA: This sheds light on one detail of the affair. But, on the whole, does the document Professor Kaplan saw in the archives explain what in many ways is still the mystery of the Rosenbergs, or doesn't it? Does it tell us whether the Rosenbergs were guilty, or not?

WEINSTEIN: The proof that the Prague intelligence people knew Rosenberg prior to his arrest adds a very important dimension to the unhappy affair, one which none of those who have been looking

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into the case, whether they leaned toward innocence or guilt, had dreamed they would have to take into consideration. And for that matter, it should have been impossible, working as we do with Western material only.

KENNEDY: I must lay down a premise. The new revelation Dr. Kaplan has imparted to us and which we believe because we have no reason to doubt his word, obviously does not change the totally negative judgment we have formed as to the imposition of the death sentence. Having said that, I should like to remind you that the Rosenberg case left two great questions unanswered: did the Rosenbergs really pass information to the Soviets, I mean were they actually guilty of treason? Was the information really important?

PANORAMA: The majority of scientists questioned on that point agree that it was not. Basically, it consisted of sketches drawn from memory by a sergeant whose scholastic record was anything but brilliant.

KENNEDY: Be that as it may, the answer to the second question is highly technical. As for the first question, though, as to whether they were guilty or innocent, it seems clear to me that what Professor Kaplan has told us confirms the theory shared by many (and, I repeat, quite independently of any opinion as to the trial), that the Rosenbergs were indeed involved in espionage for the USSR. As I see it, in the present state of our knowledge of the case, this is a revelation of the utmost importance.

WEINSTEIN: I should like to add that it is not possible now, and perhaps it never will be possible to know exactly what the Rosenbergs did. I would also emphasize the point that you have to distinguish between the guilt of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg and the unbelievable and cruel death sentence. But, having said that, I should like to say that what I have learned from Professor Kaplan, as to whose intellectual honesty there can be no doubt whatever, is of extraordinary historical significance.

Spy Hunt

The Rosenberg case is linked with the history of the atomic bomb, with the sense of safety which the possession of the terrible new weapon gave the American public for several years, and with the sense of loss that struck them when the United States' great rival, the Soviet Union, exploded its first nuclear device in the fall of 1949. Only treason on the part of U.S. communists and infiltration of Soviet spies in America, many Americans believed, could have given the Russians the atomic secret. And that is how the hunt for the traitors began.

London, 2 February 1950: British scientist Klaus Fuchs, who had worked on the American atom bomb at Los Alamos, N.M., was arrested for espionage. Fuchs confessed.

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Wheeling, West Virginia, 9 February 1950: an unknown Republican Senator, Joseph McCarthy, for the first time aired charges of "communism" and "treason" against many unidentified State Department officials. Overnight, McCarthy, whose charges turned out in most cases to be baseless, became a national celebrity.

Philadelphia, 23 May 1950: FBI agents arrested Harry Gold, a chemist, who confessed to having worked with Fuchs in atomic espionage for the USSR.

New York, 16 June 1950: David Greenglass, mechanic, a sergeant at Los Alamos during the war, charged with having passed atomic information to Gold in 1945, was arrested. Shortly thereafter, he "told what he knew."

New York, 17 July 1950: The FBI arrested Greenglass's brother-in-law, Julius Rosenberg, 32, machine-shop owner, who had been fired in 1945 from an army desk job because he was a communist.

New York, 11 August: Julius Rosenberg's wife, Ethel, Greenglass's sister, was arrested.

Laredo, Texas, 18 August: Escorted to the border by the Mexican police, Morton Sobell, 33, a university classmate of Julius Rosenberg's, was arrested.

New York, 6 March 1951: The trial of Rosenberg and Morton Sobell, on charges of atomic spying for the USSR. The events date back to the days when the U.S.A. and the USSR were allies against nazism, but the climate now is very different, and the charge is pitiless. "Their loyalty went not to our country, but to communism," said prosecuting attorney Irving Saypol in his summation to the jury. David Greenglass accused Julius of persuading him to pass along atomic secrets at Los Alamos. Gold admitted again having picked up intelligence from Fuchs and Greenglass. The charges said that the intelligence was passed on to Soviet diplomat Anatoly Yakovlev. Emanuel Bloch, the Rosenbergs' defense counsel and a lawyer for the CP of America, argued that the charges against his clients, unlike those against Gold and Greenglass, were invalid.

5 April 1951: Judge Irvin R. Kaufman pronounced the death sentence on Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. Morton Sobell got 30 years. All three protested their innocence.

October 1951: Committees for the Rosenbergs' defense were formed. More than in the U.S.A., where the earlier Alger Hiss case had somewhat sated the public's interest, the pro-innocence campaign built up in Europe.

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25 February 1952: The death sentence was confirmed on appeal.

30 December 1952: Attorney Bloch, as American law allows, tried to persuade Judge Kaufman to reduce the sentence. Why didn't the Rosenbergs plead guilty, and get a lighter sentence? "Because," Bloch explained to the judge, "deep down in their hearts they believe they are innocent."

January 1953: Two Nobel Prize-winners, Harold Urey and Albert Einstein, ask clemency for the Rosenbergs. The pro-innocence campaign was still growing.

25 May 1953: For the third time, the Supreme Court, despite favorable opinions from two of the justices, refused to hear the case.

16 June 1953: "Once again we solemnly declare our innocence," wrote the Rosenbergs in a letter asking for clemency from President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Only a confession could save them from the electric chair. A telephone line was kept open in the prison in case of a last-minute clemency decision.

19 June 1953: Having refused to make any confession, the Rosenbergs died in the electric chair, while in Washington, London, Paris, Rome, and Stockholm silently weeping crowds mourned their passing. They faced the end, wrote the NEW YORK TIMES, "with a composure that astonished all present."

Almost 24 years have gone by since that day, but the Rosenberg case, the most controversial of all the postwar espionage cases, still enthalls and touches people all over the world. There have been countless pleas for a review of the trial. "History will vindicate us," said Ethel Rosenberg before she died. "The Rosenbergs," wrote the American weekly NEWSWEEK a little while ago, "lie in an uneasy grave."

A# to:

PART IV: REVELATIONS FROM CSSR ARCHIVES (conclusion)

[24 May 1977: Triple Play for Stalin, by Karel Kaplan]

[Text] The whole truth about the Field Case. Washington charged him with spying for the Soviet Union. The Soviets were trying to make him confess he was working for Allen Dulles. Actually, he was a tool in Stalin's hands, used to unleash one of the most massive purges in the communist world.

He was a secret agent, but who was he working for? He was used in the most cynical possible way in a gigantic political game. But by whom? The Americans or the Soviets?

For 30 years, now, these questions about the incredible affair of U.S. diplomat Noel Haviland Field, who disappeared in Prague in 1949 and surfaced again, 6 years later, in Budapest, have been waiting for an answer. Nobody has been able to come up with the answers until now. So impenetrable was the cloud of dust and confusion kicked up around Field that in 1949, just as a lot of people in Washington were accusing him of spying for the USSR, over in Budapest the secret service and Soviet agents were using torture to make him confess that he was a special agent for Allen Dulles, the Grey Eminence of American espionage.

Numerous inquiries came to a dead end. Two books about the affair, one by Flora Lewis, a NEW YORK TIMES reporter, entitled "Red Pawn: The Story of Noel Field," Doubleday, 1965 and one by British reporter Stewart Steven ("Operation Splinter Factor," Hodder & Stoughton, 1974), came to diametrically opposite conclusions: he was an ignorant tool in Soviet hands, according to Flora Lewis, and a disturbing element used by Allen Dulles to put an end to the political careers of Eastern European communist leaders, according to Steven.

Karel Kaplan, the historian and former communist leader who in 1968 had access to the secret archives of the Czech CP (PANORAMA 575), now has the final word about the Field case. It was the Soviets, says Kaplan, who made use of that idealistic and somewhat ingenuous American, and who transformed an intellectual with a gentle eye and a generous heart, a dyed-in-the-wool communist who had worked for the Moscow secret services during the 'thirties, into the number one prosecution witness -- without his knowledge -- in the dreadful political trials that transpired from 1949 to 1953 in Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Bulgaria.

It was a hellish plan, one in which Stalin had a personal hand, and one which worked perfectly.

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The Kremlin's aim in 1949 was the full and absolute affirmation of Soviet power in all of Eastern Europe. To do this, Stalin had to break with his own communist ruling class, and replace it with more pliable men.

Field knew almost all the communist leaders, whom he had helped during the war when they were fleeing to escape Hitler's police. The plan the Soviet secret service came up with, despite its cruel cynicism, was little short of genius: pass Field off as an American spy, in direct contact with Dulles, and get him to list dozens, hundreds of names. Every name had a death sentence pinned to it.

"To those of us who were working on the Piller report on the political trials in Czechoslovakia," recalls Kaplan, who for the past several months has been living in Munich, "shedding light on the Field case was of the utmost importance: it would have enabled us to add one more crucial bit of evidence to prove that the Kremlin was wholly responsible for the deaths and persecution of thousands of sincere communists."

During the investigation of the Field case, whose findings were published in a 120-page study originally attached to the Piller report (Study no 35 by the working group prepared for the Rehabilitation Commission of the Central Committee) several details came to light in connection with Alger Hiss, one of Field's friends and a colleague at the State Department in Washington, who was found guilty of espionage when he was tried in 1949, and has recently filed a petition for review of his case.

Karel Kaplan's two preceding articles, one on Stalin and one on the Comintern, and the discussions of the Rosenberg case have been picked up and commented upon in the press all over the world. The essay on Noel Field, which Kaplan wrote on the basis of the documents he examined in the secret archives in Prague, is the last of the series written by the Czech historian: a world-wide exclusive for PANORAMA readers.

Mario Margiocco.

End of a Dream

"During the 3 months he was held they tried every conceivable way to torture on him," Czech secret police chief Karel Svab reported from Budapest in August 1949 directly to President Klement Gottwald. "But no matter what they did to him, he confessed nothing that was not already known."

The object of all this attention, both from his torturers in the Hungarian police and from two very high-ranking Czech officials, was a 45-year-old American communist, tall, thin, intellectual-looking. "A typical American, cordial, kind, with a wonderful smile. He would look you straight in the eye in an open and friendly way." That's how he is remembered many years later by

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the tenants of the apartment building in Marseille where he was living in 1941.

His name, Noel Haviland Field, never attracted the notoriety of his friend and colleague, Alger Hiss, or the tragic renown, in connection with a shameful trial and a cruel death sentence, of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg. And yet, strange though it may seem to someone who has never dug deep into the records of the espionage cases of the immediate postwar years and of the political trials toward the end of the 'forties, the case of Noel Field, his wife Herta, and her brother Hermann, played a crucial role in the history of the Soviet bloc. Born of the cold war, it helped to fuel and inflame the conflict between the two rival superpowers, the United States and the Soviet Union.

In the summer of 1949, it was not only two very high Czech officials like Gottwald and Svab who were interested in Field. From the Kremlin, Stalin himself was following developments day by day, determined, with his secret service, to exploit the American idealist to set up the hideous machinery for political trials of the Eastern European communist leaders and to show everybody, especially those party members who might have notions about independence from Moscow, who was really boss east of the Elbe.

Just having known Field, even years before, for thousands of sincere Hungarian, Bulgarian, Czechoslovakian, Polish, and East German communists, meant arrest, torture, long prison sentences and, in many cases, death.

But who was Noel Field? Was he really a dangerous American agent with a direct line to Allen Dulles, head of American espionage in Europe during World War II, as Moscow wanted people to believe? To find out, and to understand the political and police machinery which, from the very beginning, determined the course of the whole affair, we have to go back a few steps, and see Noel Field during the crisis in his life as an active American communist, when the outbreak of the cold war, in 1947 and 1948, shook his world to its foundations and drove him, unknowingly, straight into the trap set for him by the Soviet secret service.

It had been a long, cold, winter and, early in April, it was still snowing on the mountains around Lake Geneva. Noel Field spent long hours pondering his future, thinking back over the war years and their horrors and their great hopes, and turning over and over in his mind the menacing unknowns of the present.

By now he had time to think. A few months earlier, in October 1947, the board of the Unitarian Service Committee had informed him from Boston that he was no longer head of the American Unitarian Church Rescue Mission, set up in Europe at the outbreak of the war to succor the victims of fascism.

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Enthusiastic and dedicated, convinced that he was serving a political, not merely a humanitarian ideal, and well supplied with funds, Field had transformed the USC into one of the most important aid centers on a war-torn continent. But in the spring of 1948 there was no longer any room in the organization for a leftist intellectual who stood accused by those who had escaped from the clutches of the Gestapo, of always giving precedence to the communists.

To Field, the loss of his job was the final bit of proof, if he had needed any more, of the end of a dream he and many other leftist American intellectuals had cherished for years: that of making the wartime alliance between the United States and the Soviet Union into a solid and lasting friendship in the name of freedom and progress for the people.

What to do? Field had to decide, in April 1948, whether to stay in Western Europe and look for a job as correspondent for some American newspaper, or to go through what the former British Prime Minister, Churchill, had 2 years before dubbed the Iron Curtain, and settle in one of the new socialist countries. There he had many friends, whom he had aided during the war with every kind of assistance, with money and introductions into allied circles in Europe, could perhaps repay those favors somehow. The Soviets themselves owed him a considerable debt of gratitude which, Field was sure, they would certainly not overlook.

The fact was that for 3 years, from 1933 to 1936, Noel Field, as a young diplomat who had signed on in the State Department in 1926 as deputy vice consul to the Western European Office, had collaborated with the Kremlin's intelligence services. His motives had had nothing to do with greed for money or cynical indifference to his own country's interests, but stemmed from his conviction, rooted in the 1933 decision of the "leftist" administration of Franklin Delano Roosevelt to recognize the Bolshevik Government of the USSR, that the United States and the Soviet Union had a common mission to save the world from the abyss into which capitalism and the imperialism of the European powers were driving it. In those months, the USSR inspired a growing admiration in Noel Field, so great as to move him to approve its political, social, and economic objectives as well as the concrete steps of Soviet policy throughout the world.

He was supported in those convictions in 1933 by several friends whom Field and his wife, Herta, a young German woman with a strong and determined character, bound to her husband by ties not only of deep affection, but by shared political ideas, had met in Washington. Foremost among these friends were Hede and Paul Massing, two German anti-fascists who had made a hairsbreadth escape from the Führer's bloodhounds, and Alger Hiss, a brilliant young attorney who worked for the Agriculture Department.

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After leaving Germany, the Massings had done a lot of traveling, and they had more than ideological ties with Moscow. In America, where Hede Massing arrived in 1933, followed shortly thereafter by her husband, they had a specific secret mission to perform for the USSR intelligence service: they were to recruit intelligence sources in Washington among politicians and bureaucrats. They also helped recruit Field. This has been described in several books, including Hede Massing's own "This Deception," published in 1951. Documents in the Czech archives conform this. Alger Hiss, by now about to be transferred to the State Department, where he was to have a swift and brilliant career, as was shown during his trial in 1949, already had relations with the Soviet security services.

The Massings did not know Hiss. It was Field who introduced them, inviting them all to dinner at his house in the spring of 1935. According to what Hede Massing testified in 1949, when she had already abjured communism, at that dinner party there was actually a little verbal clash between her and Hiss, since both of them wanted to get exclusive rights to Field's collaboration (this episode is recounted in Massing's book). The two intelligence networks, the one Hiss was in contact with and the one the Massings were setting up, were in fact keenly interested in the documents on American foreign policy which Field, once his initial fear and reluctance had been overcome (at first he would merely pass on verbal summaries of the material that came across his desk), was beginning to supply to them.

In 1936 Field decided to leave the United States and transfer, still as a State Department official, to a job at the League of Nations in Geneva. The post offered to Field in Geneva was in the disarmament section, and one which, the idealistic Field was convinced, would help to drive away the gathering storm clouds of another war.

Unforeseen Event

In Geneva, the Fields settled into a lovely house, Villa La Chotte, in the little town of Vandoeuvres just outside the city. In the Swiss city Field was put in touch with a new representative of the Soviet security agency, and began to work with him. That did not last long, however, because the agent quarreled with the Kremlin and was liquidated. Not long after that, in August 1937, a top agent in Soviet military intelligence, General Walter Krivitsky, made contact with Field and invited the American diplomat to come to Paris. According to the general, this trip, called for on only a few hours' notice, was necessary because one of the top men in the Soviet intelligence service had defected, and something had to be done (other sources say it was to be actual physical elimination -- Ed.). Krivitsky and Field reached agreement on the overall operation, and then the general put Field in touch with an agent who explained to the diplomat what his role was to be. But an unforeseen event, which was to have future consequences in Field's relations with the Soviets, cancelled the whole

business. Krivitsky himself defected to the American intelligence service, and wound up 4 years later shot to death with a pistol in his room in a small Washington hotel.

The plan to get rid of the traitor, of course, was out in the open, and therefore had to be scratched. Field, who knew nothing about the defection, thought the general had been discovered and eliminated, lost all contact with the Soviet intelligence people. Only later did he find out why the Soviets had not thought of sending another agent to get in touch with Field: the fairly murky role that American had played in two events as suspicious as may be called for prudence. Some people in Moscow, in fact, thought that Field might have helped Krivitsky defect.

That Field was nevertheless quite uninvolved in the whole thing was demonstrated by the fact that in May 1938 he and Herta lightheartedly took off on a trip to Moscow, as tourists. Had he had anything whatever to do with the Krivitsky affair, Field would certainly not have been so rash as to venture into the very den of the Kremlin's secret service.

During that short stay in the Soviet capital, the Fields again ran into the Massings. With their help, Field tried again to join the American Communist Party, and this time he succeeded, at least partially. He was not admitted as a full member, but only through a special affiliate run directly by the Comintern, the Communist Third Internationale, and kept secret even from the leaders of the American CP. The Soviets in fact had no interest in allowing people like Field to make their CP membership known, and for that reason they had instituted secret membership, via the Comintern, some time before. During that stay in Moscow, Field was also given a password with which he could identify the Soviet agent who would be sent to renew contact with him.

Shortly after his return to Geneva, the League of Nations shut-up shop, as it was foundering in the worsening climate of war. Early in the spring of 1939 Hitler invaded and dissolved the State of Czechoslovakia. Noel's brother, Hermann Field, who was in London, left for Poland to work for the British Trust, a humanitarian organization that managed to save hundreds of Czechs from the clutches of the Gestapo. In 1941 Noel and his wife Herta, too, after joining the Unitarian Service Committee (whose headquarters was Marseille), could plunge enthusiastically into the work of succoring war victims.

For Field, this was the beginning of a long period of frenzied work. He traveled constantly between France and Switzerland and took advantage of that fact to act as courier among various groups in the anti-fascists struggle. He made contact with the leaders of communist and antifascist groups all over Europe, particularly with the Czechs, Poles, Hungarians, and Germans. Field did not want to be confined to a supporting role, but longed to be on the front lines in the struggle against Hitler.

He considered it altogether natural and in harmony with Soviet foreign policy to carry on the gathering of intelligence about the political, economic, and military situation in the nazi-occupied territories and to pass on that intelligence to any anti-fascist power that might indicate interest in having it. Undoubtedly he would have preferred to work with the Soviets, but that direct link seemed to have been severed, at least for the time being. In 1943 a Moscow agent had turned up, with the all-important password. He had asked whether Field was still disposed to collaborate and, upon receiving an affirmative reply, ordered the American diplomat to draw up a detailed report on his meeting with Krivitsky and on his own activities over the past several years. Field hesitated not a moment in agreeing to the collaboration or in doing what had been asked of him. When he handed in the report he was told to wait for further contact, but he waited in vain.

While the Soviets did not seem particularly interested in Field's offer of collaboration, a degree of interest in the intelligence collected by the hundreds of people Field had known as director of the USC was manifested by the American intelligence services, the OSS (Office for Strategic Services), predecessor of the better-known CIA, whose Berne office was run during the war by Allen Dulles, who later became director of the CIA. Field sent them some information, data of at best limited importance and helpful only in the military struggle against Nazism.

Toward the end of the war Field also went to Paris with a recommendation from Dulles, intending to set up a German Anti-fascists Committee for Eastern Europe. The suggestion, as recounted by American historian Arthur Meyer Schlesinger, Jr., then a young corporal in the Paris OSS, did not arouse much enthusiasm: the idea was to set up an organism which, relying mainly on refugees, would gather intelligence of all kinds about Germany and about the territories still occupied by the Germans. So the last 2 years of the war passed in constant traveling from one refugee camp to another, visits to hospitals, and growing hopes for the final victory of the anti-fascists forces.

The Letter to Dulles

In April 1945, during the final weeks of the conflict, Field did something destined, within a few years, to change his existence totally and to subject him to unimaginable trials. Of itself, it was innocuous enough: just a letter asking that backing be given Tibor Szenyi, a Hungarian anti-fascist and communist who was later to die on the gallows when the Stalinist trials hit his country. The letter was addressed to somebody with whom it was quite normal in those days, even for a communist like Field, to have relations: Allen Dulles. To make sure Dulles got it, Field gave the letter to a Swiss acquaintance, together with a covering note saying: "Dear Sir" I enclose the letter for Mr. Dulles which I promised this morning. Sincerely, N.H. Field."

[REDACTED]

USC aid to the victims of fascism did not end with the termination of hostilities. And Field, who had always given the communists most among the antifascists his organization helped, continued to do so. In some Eastern European countries, he even managed to get a communist onto the USC board. In Czechoslovakia, for example, the job was held until 1946 by Gejna Pavlik, a veteran communist activist who had taken part in the October Revolution in Russia, and one of his jobs was to provide Field with information as to the country's economic and social situation. Pavlik had reported this activity of his both to Jaromir Dolansky and Villiam Siroky, both of them very high ranking officials in the Czech Communist Party, both of whom told him to go right ahead with it.

Furthermore, immediately after the war, and still in contact with the European communist leadership groups, Field was able to meet in Switzerland with several of the foremost figures in the Czech CP, among them Arthur London, the future deputy foreign minister and one of the three acquitted among the 14 on trial in the Slansky case, Evzen Klinger and Otto Kosta, both high ranking officials in the Ministry of Information.

All this activity came to a stop at the end of 1947, as we have seen, when Field was fired. At this point, in addition to the matter of finding another job, there was another more urgent problem: at the end of 1948, all American sojourn permits for Europe lapsed. In order to be able to stay in Europe and work as a reporter, as was Field's intention, you needed a new American sojourn permit, which was hard to get now that a lot of stories about Field's CP membership were beginning to circulate in Washington, or else you needed a new sojourn permit for one of the new Eastern countries. What to do?

Field's uncertainty came to an end with the arrival in Switzerland in April 1948. with an invitation to come to Czechoslovakia as a prize for all he had done during the war, of Klinger and Kosta. Field, delighted at the prospect, accepted the invitation and a month later left on a lengthy visit to Prague and Warsaw. His objective: to get a sojourn permit and find a job.

He hoped to get all this without difficulty in the East. He made the rounds of friends he had made during the war, all of them now holding down important jobs. He considered, as a beginning, settling down for a while in Prague and writing a book for Western readers about the people's democracies. He had already begun gathering the necessary data.

Among the people Field saw in Prague was Vilem Novy, a member of the Party CC, a member of parliament, and editor-in-chief of RUBE PRAVO, Rudolf Margolius, who in 1949 was to be named deputy minister for Foreign Trade and in 1952 was to climb the scaffold with Rudolf Slansky, Karel Markus, Alice Kohnova, and Gizela Kischova. All gave him letters of recommendation for a sojourn permit.

mittee, a man very close to the
viet security people.

In Poland, too, Field asked his old friends for help. He made contact with Jakub Berman, a member of the Politburo, in charge of intelligence, and then the number-2 man in Poland. Berman promised to help him. In September he contacted Leo Bauer, an important official in the German CP, who gave him word from East German leader Paul Marker, whom Field had helped to escape to Mexico in 1942, word that there would be no obstacles to his joining the Party.

In October and November 1948, the so-called "intelligence sector" (Evidencni Oddeleni) of the general secretariat of the Czech CP, headed by Svab, gathered information about Field. To do this, Svab's men turned to the American's friends and acquaintances, almost all of whom had nothing but good things to say about him. Somebody even came up with the letter sent on 13 November 1948 to Geminder from the central office of the Unified Party of East Germany (SED), signed not only by Marker but also by another top party leader, Franz Dahlem, asking that American communist Field be granted permission to stay temporarily in Czechoslovakia.

During that same period Svab tapped A. Jandus, of the "party protection" section, to tail Field. Jandus used a woman, a member of the CP, who knew Field well, and from her he found out that Field "for his book, needed to make the acquaintance of some representatives of the opposition." That there were already some suspicions about Field, perhaps stemming from this very eagerness of his to meet representatives of an opposition which, since the coup d'etat of February 1948, no longer officially existed, is evidenced in the report drafted later, in June of 1949, when Field had already been arrested. "Our prudence in dealing with Field has proved justified," said the report, "in light of the copy of a highly interesting letter found in Pavlik's safe-deposit box (Pavlik-Politzer was arrested later, at the time of the Slansky trial -- Ed.) The letter is addresser to 'Dear Leo' (probably Leo Bauer -- Ed.). Field confided to Leo that he had pulled all the strings he could to get a Czech sojourn permit, and complained that even so, he had not succeeded." (From the Archives of the Czech CP Central Committee, Files from the Interior Ministry, 372/2 82.)

In any case, whether they actually had some doubts about Field or whether, after they had arrested him, they were trying to show that they had had, the men of Svab's section, in October and November 1948 came out in favor of granting the sojourn permit, although there was a catch: Field would first have to answer some questions put to him by the secret police. It was on this occasion that Field told the Prague intelligence people about his past

from the transcript of the questioning, and with somebody from the Moscow intelligence headquarters. At this point, however, the Prague intelligence people, who had been planning to enlist Field as one of their own agents, lost all interest in him. They were not about to get into competition with their Soviet colleagues and snatch an agent away from them.

The upshot of the questioning was a report from the regional secret police official of the Prague section, in which it was stated that N. Field has socialist ideas." The date of the report is 20 November 1948. Shortly thereafter Field got a visa valid until the following May, and immediately left for France and Switzerland to settle his affairs there before establishing permanent residence in the new people's democracies of the East.

Meanwhile several things of extreme importance to the future of Noel Field and that of his wife, Herta, had been happening. About some of them, which were headlined in all the papers, Field was completely aware. About others, planned in deep secrecy by the espionage headquarters of the Eastern countries, he was completely in the dark.

Three months before he got his visa from the Czech authorities, while he was staying in Warsaw in August 1948, Field had found out that the Massings had testified before the House Un-American Activities Committee, having meanwhile abjured communism and severed all ties with the Soviet Union. Field, although there was no formal evidence to support it, was sure that the Massings, in their depositions, had mentioned him, too, and in fact this strong suspicion had spurred him to even greater efforts to obtain the longed-for sojourn permit from some Eastern country. The more so since, 2 months after the alarming news about the Massing testimony, the American press had informed Field of another dreadful event involving him: on 16 October, in fact, the NEW YORK HERALD TRIBUNE had published the news that the HUAC had released the so-called Chambers deposition, a 1,300-page document including, in addition to accusations lodged against American communists by ex-communist and journalist Whittaker Chambers, an additional early deposition from the Massings. Then, in December, Chambers produced further documents which he had had in his possession for years, which showed that during the 'Thirties there had been two groups of Soviet agents operating inside the State Department, one headed by Alger Hiss, the other by Noel Field. Clearly, this increased Field's insecurity and convinced him -- if indeed he needed convincing -- that he could never return to the United States. And when he refused the official summons to return to America, where the Congressional investigating committee wanted to question him, that road was cut off forever. He even considered, as he said later under questioning by the Hungarian police, the possibility that the American police might try to kidnap him or silence him forever.

The actual attack, though, came from another quarter, from the quarter he had served, not from the one he was working against.

The Czech secret police had begun to take an interest in Field, who bade fair to be a good agent in future, back in April of 1948, more or less at the same time when Kosta and Klinger, unaware of the secret service plans, had gone to Switzerland to invite Field to Czechoslovakia.

The Prague secret services were looking for collaborators among American citizens. They had actually sent some of their agents to the United States, among them a woman member of the CCP who had been a member before the war, and who had spent some of the war years in America. She was neither a very capable person, nor suited to this very delicate sort of work. In view of the difficulties she was encountering, she had herself asked to be relieved of her mission and brought home. The only fruit of her work had been a few reports on the situation in American intellectual and progressive circles in which, among others, she had mentioned Field's name (she had known him for years) as a possible collaborator with the Czech secret services. She had also suggested that Field be recruited into the secret service and officially given the mission of organizing the intelligence network among his own fellow-citizens.

She was not the only one to mention Field's name to the top people in the secret services. In the summer of 1948, while the former American diplomat was in the Eastern countries, he was recommended as an agent by a lot of other people who knew him well. Via Arthur London, the letter Field had written to Dulles at the end of the war had come back to Czechoslovakia. In Prague, the letter was received by the security forces, specifically by the official in the Czech secret services who was working with American intellectuals and who was interested in Field.

On 19 November a secret police official, by the name of Wehle, who was later hanged during the purges, was telling his colleagues that Field knew Dulles. The proof? A letter, said Wehle, written by Field at the end of the war. Even though the official was confusing Allen Dulles with his brother, John Foster Dulles, the future Secretary of State, the name Dulles was automatically synonymous in the East -- and not without reason -- with the idea of peril and threat.

But Wehle had not found out about the letter from London. Somebody had already spoken to the Czech authorities about the famous message from Field to Dulles. A copy of the letter, which was later to be the prime piece of evidence of Field's collaboration with American intelligence, had already been sent to

[REDACTED]

Prague in the spring of 1948 by the Soviet intelligence command for Central Europe, whose headquarters run by General Belkin, were in Vienna. Why that move?

The explanation, after lengthy examination of all the documents relating to the political trials in Czechoslovakia, seems pretty simple today: Soviet intelligence, probably on direct orders from Stalin, was already laying the groundwork for a great political trial in the people's democracies, and had already given some thought to assigning Noel Field a role in this grand stage production.

The trouble for the Soviets was that nobody in Prague was impressed by the letter, and nobody there attached too much importance to it. Notwithstanding their having received the copy of the letter sent them by the Soviets, the Czech police in 1948 actually issued a visa to Field, as we have already seen, thus confirming his status as a socialist.

In view of the skimpy results he had achieved in Prague, Belkin and his men went prospecting elsewhere and, since the famous Field letter to Dulles dealt with the Hungarian communist leader Szonyi they turned to Budapest. One of the leaders in the Czech secret police, I. Milén, one of whose jobs was to keep in touch with the Hungarians, stated later that he had learned from his Hungarian colleague, Colonel Szücs, that the whole Field matter had popped out of "Field's letter to Allen Dulles, which dated back to the end of the war and which had fallen into the hands of the Hungarian intelligence people. I know that the same letter, or one like it," said Milén, "was also in the hands of our secret service." (Archives of the CCP CC., File G, Commission I, item 752.)

In the latter half of January 1949, Szücs arrived in Prague. He had come to ask his Czech colleagues' help in shadowing and perhaps arresting Noel Field. From the notes made on 23 January by the secret service man in Slovakia, Valasek, concerning that meeting, we find that the help was to consist in arresting Field and handing him over to the Budapest people.

During that period Field's friends in Czechoslovakia and Hungary already knew that he was suspected of spying on the people's democracies and on the USSR. The news had come from Budapest. The Czech President, Klement Gottwald, tried to call his country's intelligence sleuths off the matter, and showed no desire to authorize Field's arrest. Later on, of course, he changed his mind, and had this to say about his decision: "If even General Belkin has verified the facts in this matter, do what they ask."

On 5 May 1949, at the invitation of a representative of Czech intelligence, Noel Field went to Le Bourget airport in Paris, and boarded Air France flight 240 non-stop to Prague. Wholly in the

dark as to what was going on, he kissed his wife Herta goodbye, promising that they would soon be together for good, in the Czech capital. Here, meanwhile, the stage was being set, down to the last detail.

Arrested

The Interior Ministry informed the Hungarians of Field's arrival, and asked that Szücs come immediately, bringing with him the evidence of Field's criminal activities. The ministry people also wanted Matyas Rakosi, the leader of the Hungarian communists who officially had the final word in this matter, to make a request directly to Gottwald to use the Prague police to make the arrest. On 9 May, Gottwald received the following telegram: "Please comply with our request and arrest Field, recently returned to Prague. Rakosi."

On 11 May, the Czech secret service arrested Field and immediately shipped him off to Budapest. Two weeks later, from 24 to 29 May, the representative of the Soviet police, General Belkin, stayed on Prague. He was there in his capacity as responsible for the safety of the Soviet delegation to the Czech communist congress. He talked with the Prague leaders about, among other things, the "Field case," since he was concerned with it as a special adviser to Hungary. The leader of the Hungarian Party delegation also mentioned the matter to the Czech representatives.

In Budapest the Hungarian secret police, working with the Soviet advisers, particularly LIKHACHOV and Makarov, tried out several interrogation procedures on Field, using cruel tortures. But nothing worked. They could not get him to confess his non-existent spying for Dulles, much less having set up a network of agents in the people's democracies for the purpose of cutting the Eastern countries off from the Soviet Union. Even Colonel Szücs like Svab, marvelled at Field's having stood up under so much and such dreadful torture without confessing anything.

All the butchers found out was that Field had collaborated with Soviet intelligence and about the pressures brought to bear on Field by the American authorities, beginning in the summer of 1948, to get him to come home. They were given reason to recollect the unflagging aid Field had given during the war to the anti-fascists, and particularly to communists. They got an explanation as to why Field had written that famous letter to Dulles. They wrenched from him information about the book he was writing, and the names of those who had given him completely innocuous information about the development of the people's democracies.

They also got a lengthy list of communist leaders, practically all of those Field had known and helped during the war years. This was the origin of the list of people who became, thanks to

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Soviet intelligence, suspect of espionage or subversion. It was enough for Field, all unknowing, to have mentioned their names! The Dulles letter became the foundation on which to build the great political trial of the Secretary of the Hungarian Communist Party, Lázsló Rajk, which ended in three death sentences, including that of Tibor Szonyi.

A Cruel Game

Neither Field nor his wife, nor yet his brother, Hermann, who as we shall see had been arrested after him, ever appeared before the court, either on charges or as witnesses. They were kept in the shadows, used, and not only in Hungary, but in Bulgaria, in East Germany, and in Czechoslovakia, as mysterious witnesses who had testified for the prosecution. No less than 300 top people in the East German CP, for example, were stripped of their office and imprisoned solely for having known Field briefly in the past.

Why this apparently absurd behavior on the part of the secret police in Hungary and in the other countries, particularly in the Soviet Union, who were actually the stage directors and producers of the Field case?

First of all, the Field case was the contribution of the Soviet secret police, working with their opposite numbers in the people's democracies, to demonstrating the inherent rightness of the ideological formulas and the political line of the Cominform. Specifically, support was needed for Stalin's line on the heightening of the class struggle and on the penetration by enemies into the communist world, and evidence was required to back the charge that American imperialists were trying to isolate and separate the people's democracies from the Soviet Union; lastly, the Soviets could use some emphasis on their charge that the Yugoslav leaders were anti-Soviet imperialist agents. All these ideological and "theoretical" formulas with which Marxism-Leninism was then being interpreted were the fruit of the cold war and, at the same time, constituted the facade designed to mask the real intentions of Soviet policy, which was then one of preparation for war on the United States.

Set against this background, the Field character offered several potentials for profitable use. Most important of all, though, it was a chance to strike at the heart of the whole ruling class in Eastern Europe, whom he had known during the war. It was the most effective, albeit the cruellest way to root out any vestige of resistance to the new lines of Soviet policy and to rid the apparatus -- and sometimes the earth -- of people who, for one reason or another, no longer enjoyed Moscow's full confidence.

It is also more than likely that, in the Field affair, the not always bloodless struggle during those years between the American and Soviet intelligence forces played a part. The American police

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had discovered the espionage system of which Field had been part. It is true that it had not been operating for more than 10 years, but the men who unleashed the anti-Soviet campaign in the United States exploited it to fuel their hysterical attacks on the USSR. The Soviet police responded -- and this is a guess that certainly is a sound one -- by picking all their cards up from the table and starting a new game. They turned their own agent into an American agent. They sacrificed their own man, who for one thing was of no more use to them and toward whom, over the Krivitsky affair and in the wake of the "Massings' betrayal," they had some suspicions, and they turned him from a Soviet agent into a spy for American imperialism. And since Field's whole family had participated one way and another, at least through their political activism, the whole family was caught up in the pitiless game.

Herta Field, worried to death over her husband's disappearance, and not having heard from him since 10 May, arrived in Prague in August, accompanied by her brother-in-law, Hermann Field. They searched desperately among their friends in Prague, trying to pick up some trace of him. Herta had already written, when her husband had first vanished, to Arthur London, deputy foreign minister: "I am certain," she had said in her letter, "that he has fallen into some trap set for him by agents of the American Government on 11 or 12 May."

From the moment they entered Czech territory, the police had followed the Fields' every move. Ms. Field, who had told both London and Markus she was coming, met with the two communist leaders in a hotel where the police had installed hidden microphones.

From the tapes of that conversation, which were immediately transcribed by the secret service and is now in the Party archives in Prague, we see Ms. Field's deep concern for her husband's safety. The lady, completely unaware of the cruel design of the people who had orchestrated the whole affair, announced her desire to seek help from -- ironically -- the Czech secret service. She was certain that, after the Massing and Alger Hiss cases, her husband had been kidnaped by the American police, and that sooner or later he would be haled before an American tribunal. She did not know what to do: all she hoped was that she would somehow be able to help her husband, even in such extraordinarily difficult circumstances as political kidnaping. She asked the secret service to confirm or deny the kidnaping theory, so that, if necessary, she could organize a massive press campaign to save Field from the American judges. Both London and Markus approved her decision to ask the Czech intelligence people for help.

At the police station, where she went immediately afterwards, Herta Field once more revealed her fears, as shown by the transcript of the conversation. On that occasion, she described in detail the espionage activities in which her husband had been engaged while he was still at the State Department in Washington.

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Her information also coincided with what Noel had told his torturers in Budapest. Even the lists of names which the two provided were more or less identical. In the end, the Czech police promised to help find Noel Field, and assured Herta that they would keep her informed: actually, they were very careful not to lift a finger, fearing that Herta and Hermann would mount a newspaper campaign that would have ruined, or at least complicated the plan that had been laid to make Noel Field the accuser in all the political trials.

Shortly thereafter, on 22 August, Hermann went to Warsaw, where he knew a lot of people. But, as he was preparing to return to Prague, he was arrested, repeatedly interrogated by the Polish police, and thrown into jail.

The noose was about to tighten around Hermann, too.

On 25 August the head of a special section of the Central Committee of the Czech CP, O. Papel, asked Party Secretary Slansky whether there was any reason why Herta Field should not be arrested. Almost simultaneously a similar query came from Budapest. The decision, in view of the importance of the case in which, as everybody knew, Stalin took a personal interest, was left up to Gottwald. The Czech communist leader and President of the Republic gave his consent on 26 August, but attached a recommendation that the secret services not get involved in the affair. By the time it was framed, however, that recommendation had already been made a dead letter by events, because the Czech secret police were up to their necks in the business by then.

On 27 August, through some friends who already knew the truth, the police told Herta that they had managed to get news of her husband, and informed her that they would take her to where Noel was. Herta, with several police officials, set off in a car for Bratislava. There she was taken into custody by the Hungarian police. In the following weeks every attempt on the part of Elsie Field, Hermann's wife, to find out what had become of her husband, was in vain. The United States consular authorities, under pressure from the public to explain the mysterious disappearance of three American citizens, one after the other, tried in vain to find out what was going on. Erika Glaser, a young German anti-fascist whom the Fields had met in Spain during the final months of the civil war and had sheltered as their own daughter on several occasions, determined to try to find them: she disappeared in Berlin in September 1949, and wound up in Siberia.

For 5 years, even though their name still sent terror into the hearts of all who had known them or even heard of them, the Fields seemed to have vanished into thin air.

Hermann was the first to be heard of: he left the Polish prison of Miedzsyn at the end of September 1954 and, after receiving an

indemnity of \$50,000 from the Polish Government, returned to the United States, where he is now teaching architecture.

The last one to regain freedom, in 1955, when Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation campaign was already dismantling most of the police apparatus established during the dark Stalin years, was Erika Glaser. Meanwhile, on 17 November 1954, Budapest Radio announced that "it was no longer possible to sustain the charges laid in the past" against the Fields, and Noel and Herta were freed too.

With a decision that was somewhat surprising at the time, they decided not to go back to the United States and settled down instead in a pretty little hillside house on the outskirts of Budapest, where Noel died in 1972, and where Herta lives still.

They still professed unwavering faith in the political creed to which they had devoted their entire lives. "Both of us feel the symptoms of premature old age," Field wrote to a friend in 1956. "Out faith in a better future," he added, in that same letter, "has never left us."

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