

## How seriously does Casey want to prosecute NBC?

by Criton Zoakos

On May 7, CIA Director William Casey, simply threatened to "consider asking the Justice Department" to prosecute the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times*, the *Washington Times*, *Time*, and *Newsweek*, for publishing information revealing secrets of U.S. communications intelligence methods and procedures. A few days later, Mr. Casey recanted his threat to ask for prosecution. Still later, on May 19, after considerable pressure, from circles which question Mr. Casey's sagacity in running the affairs of U.S. intelligence, the CIA director moved post-haste to request from the Department of Justice the prosecution of the National Broadcasting Corporation, for violation of Section 798 of Title 18 of the U.S. Code.

NBC's alleged violation occurred in a news-analysis broadcast on the espionage trial case of former NSA employee Ronald W. Pelton, for passing U.S. communications intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. The NBC report was said to have contained classified information which compromises U.S. intelligence methods and procedures.

Following Casey's request, the matter now rests with the Department of Justice. Will the Attorney-General of the United States, Edwin Meese, move to prosecute NBC—the television network which, some say, stands for "National Bolshevik Corporation," others for "Nothing But Cocaine," and which has generally become the object of public derision—and is also the object of a spreading nationwide boycott?

No particular eagerness for prosecution has been coming from the Attorney-General's quarters—so far. Nor was Casey too enthusiastic in filing against NBC, grudgingly citing his "statutory obligation."

Both men, in fact, have their hands full with an extraordinary complex of crucial cases, the unraveling of any one of

which, could well fell "all the trees in the forest." In fact, it appears that the case of the prosecution of NBC is merely the proverbial tip of the iceberg, underneath which lurks one of the most dramatic fights within the intelligence and law-enforcement community since the end of the Second World War.

### The broader context

The last time Edwin Meese's hand was forced was when Teamster President Jackie Presser, a 14-year informant of the FBI, was indicted by a federal grand jury in Cleveland May 16. On that same day, an earlier indictment was unsealed, of the FBI head of the Cleveland Organized Crime Task Force, Robert S. Friedrich. Unconfirmed rumors are circulating in Washington, that there already are sealed indictments for 24 more FBI officials, most of them involved in "handling" the FBI's "informant networks," inside organized-crime circles. Many former and present members of the U.S. Congress had bitter experiences with this seamy side of the FBI, which, for the most part, deals with such commodities as Mel Weinberg and Brilab and Abscam.

Potentially, the Presser/Friedrich indictments, along with the rumored additional sealed indictments, could bring down the former and present heads of the—appropriately named—Criminal Division of the FBI, and FBI Director William Webster. Meese had not desired to get on board the Presser/Friedrich case—he was forced into it. Will he be similarly forced into prosecuting NBC?

This will depend on the now unfolding fight, on a broader yet plane, in which, one must include; a) the busting, by U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani of New York, of a U.S.-Israeli illegal gun-running network headed by Israeli General Avraham Bar-Am, b) the still unresolved Jonathan Pollard case

which involved U.S. government officials spying on behalf of Israel, c) the Ronald Pelton case itself, d) the suddenly rapidly growing rivalry between New York District Attorney Robert Morgenthau and U.S. Attorney Rudolph Giuliani respecting, on the surface, the New York Democratic Party corruption scandals, and, e) the highly secretive law enforcement investigations of a new phenomenon in U.S. organized crime, known by the name "the Russian Mafia."

At a recent closed-door conference of law-enforcement officials in New York City, the subject of the "Russian Mafia," was identified as an extensive network of criminal activities involving cocaine trafficking, gold smuggling, counterfeiting, and dirty money laundering carried out by recent immigrants from the Soviet Union. Many of these immigrants, according to law-enforcement authorities, are hardened criminal elements of Soviet society who have been dumped on the shores of the United States as a matter of deliberate policy of the Soviet government. Rep. Stephen Solarz's political organization at Brighton Beach in Brooklyn, New York, is dominated by these elements. Others are deeply involved in the corruption scandals of the New York City Democratic Party.

The relevance of this "Russian Mafia" for the case of the CIA versus NBC is established through the mediating role of the Anti-Defamation League, which, as it should be clear by now, has, for a long time, been living a double life of sorts: one overt and public, in open association and cooperation with elements of the Justice Department and sections of the FBI; the other, secret, function of the ADL is the involvement of some of its key members, and most emphatically its national chairman, Kenneth Bialkin, in international organized crime activities spanning both the East bloc and the West.

Exemplary of this role of the ADL is fugitive from U.S. justice Robert Vesco, the client of attorney Kenneth Bialkin. Vesco, today, living in Castro's Cuba, is the leading financial organizer of cocaine and other "hard drug" traffic from Latin America to the United States, a project supervised by the Soviet KGB. Bialkin's and Vesco's involvement in this inter-American project is reflected in what is going on with the "Russian Mafia" of fake immigrants, from Brighton Beach to Miami, Denver, Philadelphia, and elsewhere.

The question then arises: What can one make of that section of the FBI which cooperates with the KGB- and drug-tainted ADL? This is the question on which both William Casey and Edwin Meese are stuck, both with respect to the Presser/Friedrich indictments and with respect to the timid attempt to prosecute NBC for violation of espionage laws. Both instances bring to light the new style of intelligence activities which the Soviet services introduced, since their reorganization in 1967-68 when they decided to go in a big way into international drug trafficking as an instrument of political warfare—and to thus develop, over the years, extensive relations to the previously established Western crime families and networks.

In the last 15 years or so, the FBI's counterespionage

functions have been the laughingstock of the world, having transformed the U.S.A. into a veritable sieve of leaks. At the same time, most of the FBI's effort was diverted into nefarious "infiltrations" and "informant development programs" into the ranks of organized crime which produced a situation, such as in the Presser/Friedrich case or the Mel Weinberg case, or other Abscam and Brilab schemes, in which it is impossible to discriminate, even in a court of law, between criminals, protected informants, and FBI agents. The more organized crime made its money by Russian KGB-sponsored drug trafficking, the more the FBI got entangled with organized crime.

The case of NBC espionage derives exactly from this anomalous situation: NBC is notorious, not only for its close collaboration with the ADL, the public relations firm of the Meyer Lansky syndicate, and Robert Vesco, but NBC is the television network most notorious for giving a public forum to the views of known spokesmen of the drug lobby such as Mark Nykanen, Dennis King, et al. NBC, in addition, has developed a special business relation in the area of international broadcasting with the Soviet government since last year. A comparison of NBC editorial opinions on major international issues in recent years will reveal that their divergence from official Moscow opinion is only nominal.

In comparison with the documentable, extensive anti-American activities of NBC over the years, Casey's recent request for prosecution is a very timid move indeed. The case of the other news organizations, the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, etc., earlier threatened with prosecution, is similar. All these entities could have been brought to trial on May 7, for their disclosures of state secrets respecting the intelligence gathering preceding the U.S. air raid against Libya. It was as a result of their disclosing U.S. secrets in this matter that a Libyan national who was a CIA agent operating in East Berlin was assassinated by Qaddafi's men. This was Mohammed Ashour, a Libyan diplomat who supplied the critical intelligence which led to the April 15 raid against Libya. His body was found in East Berlin on May 3, after the disclosures in the U.S. media.

Similar such actions by U.S. news organizations have grown dramatically, first since the famous Pentagon Papers case, and later, since the assassination of CIA Athens Station Chief Richard Welch in 1975—who had also been "fingering" by protected U.S. journalistic sources. The impunity with which major U.S. news organizations have carried out treason and espionage over these years has its causes concealed in the way in which the FBI has failed dramatically in its domestic counterespionage and counterintelligence mandate. The FBI failed because it was in bed with organized crime, which was in bed with the KGB. The relation between Oliver "Buck" Revell, Kenneth Bialkin, and Robert Vesco explains how.

To actually prosecute NBC, one must have the guts to take on the "Trust" hiding behind this international intrigue. Does William Casey have such guts?