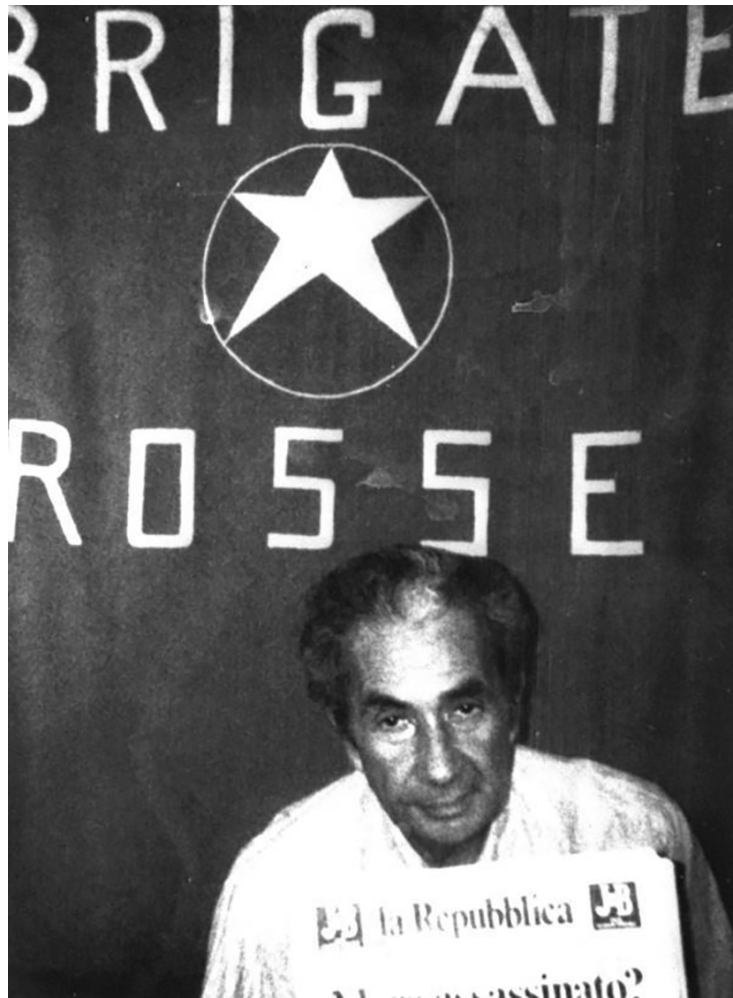


## 16.

### **Field Manual 30-31B**

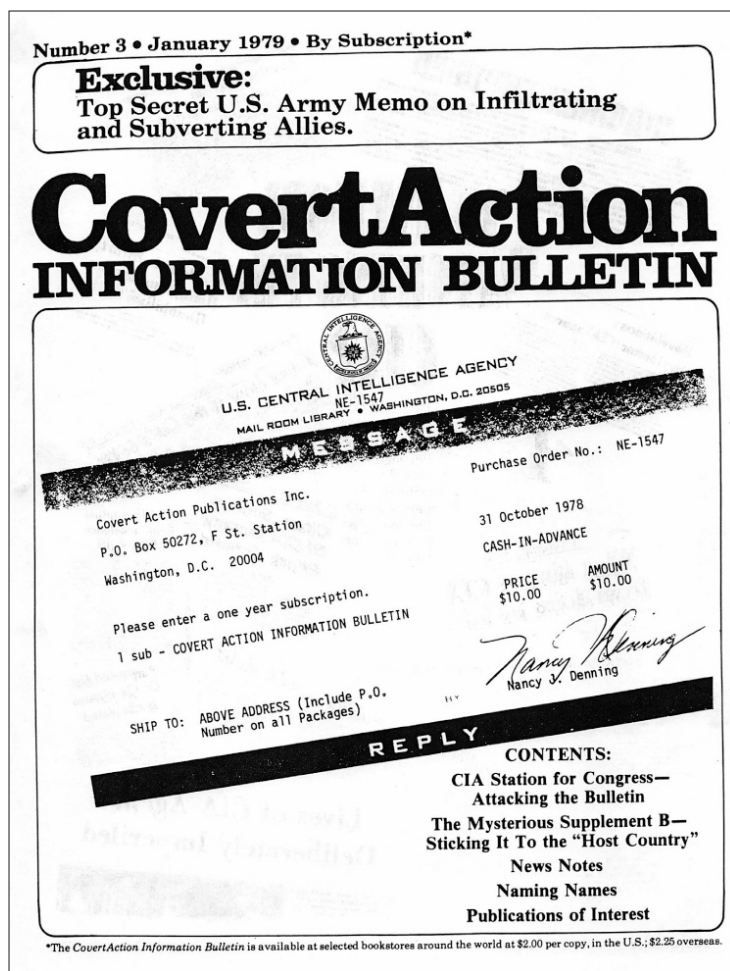
The romance between Agee and the *Counterspy* activists was brief. Before long, personalities clashed and an internal rift opened, as is common in organizations driven by energetic activists with big egos. In the summer of 1976, Agee's faction split away from the Fifth Estate and started a new magazine, the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. "We have felt, since the beginning, that there is an important and vital role to be played by the sort of exposés for which *Counterspy* had become world-famous," the editors wrote. "We decided the dissemination of such information must resume." First CAIB was also headquartered at Dupont Circle, but later relocated into a small office in the National Press Building in Washington, D.C. The activists were publishing, researching, and collecting compromising intelligence—in short, they were running their own form of active measures. The line between activism and active measures had begun to blur, and the KGB no longer needed Agee and his co-editors to be witting influence agents—unwitting, they were even more useful.



**In March 1978, the Red Brigades kidnapped and later killed Aldo Moro, the head of Italy's conservative party. The KGB used a forged U.S. Army manual to blame the CIA for the killing.**

Nothing illustrates this new dynamic better than *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. The first editorial, published in the summer of 1978, expressed confidence that there was enough subscriber demand “to make this publication a permanent weapon in the fight against the CIA, the FBI, military intelligence, and all the other instruments of U.S. imperialist oppression throughout the world.”<sup>1</sup> The editors encouraged readers to submit leads, tips, suggestions, and guest articles. It was another attempt at a *Whole Earth Catalog* of counterintelligence activism, predating the internet yet already beginning to act like a community engagement platform and outlet for user-generated content and anonymous leaks. In its opening editorial, the new magazine vouched to go after the CIA especially: “we

will never stop exposing CIA personnel and operations whenever and wherever we find them.” The editors then added a call for submissions, including a post office box address for anonymous mail, emphasizing a particular interest in “copies of US diplomatic lists and US embassy staff and/or telephone directories, from any countries.”<sup>2</sup>



***Covert Action Information Bulletin***, a new anti-intelligence community journal, first published the full English version of the U.S. Army manual FM 30-31B after a self-described Army “whistle-blower” personally delivered the KGB forgery to the activists.

The second issue contained a how-to guide for uncovering CIA officers under diplomatic cover, and an “exclusive” column titled “Naming Names” revealed the identities of U.S. intelligence personnel serving under cover in France, Italy, India, Venezuela, and Jordan. In January 1979, in its third issue, the *Bulletin* opened with a bang: “Exclusive: Top Secret U.S. Army

Memo on Infiltrating and Subverting Allies.” The lead article foreshadowed the future of disinformation. To understand the significance of this extraordinary publication, one must grasp the significance of one of the KGB’s most sophisticated and impactful forgeries, known as FM 30-31B.

U.S. Army field manuals are commonly abbreviated as “FM,” and usually designated with a number. The 30 series was focused on military intelligence. FM 30-31 was an actual publication on the theory and nature of insurgencies, and the use of military intelligence to crush them, as informed by the Vietnam War. The extensive manual was first issued in 1967, and was updated in 1970 and again in 1972. The document also contained a classified (SECRET NOFORN) supplement, mentioned on its first page, which was designated as FM 30-31A, *Stability Operations—Intelligence Collection*.<sup>3</sup> Doctrinal publications constantly evolve, so in 1981, as the army reconsidered its battlefield approach after defeat in Vietnam, FM 30-31 became obsolete.<sup>4</sup>

The KGB became aware of FM 30-31, including its secret supplement, not long after it was finished in 1970. The disinformation specialists at Service A sensed a triple opening: aggressive U.S. bombing campaigns in Vietnam were fueling anti-Americanism abroad and fracturing the American body politic; Europe was facing a wave of extreme-left activism that veered into militancy and terrorism; and decolonization was sweeping across the developing world, often accompanied by subversion and insurgency. So the Soviet forgers got to work on a document that would exploit all three causes. It would become known as Field Manual 30-31, Supplement B, or FM 30-31B.

The forgery was of very high quality. The document was written in a nearly flawless rendition of the drab, bureaucratic English, sprinkled with abbreviations and jargon, commonly used in U.S. military manuals. FM 30-31B started off with an explanation of why it was a top-secret document with restricted circulation: because the army considered friendly “host nation agencies” a target for U.S. intelligence operations. “The fact that U.S. Army involvement goes deeper can in no circumstances be acknowledged,” the document said. It went on:

U.S. involvement in these less-developed nations threatened by insurgency is part of the world-wide U.S. involvement in the struggle against Communism. Insurgency may have other than Communist origins; in tribal, social, religious, or regional differences. But, whatever its source, the fact of insurgency offers opportunities for Communist infiltration which, in the absence of effective countermeasures, may culminate in successful Communist take-over.

The forgers included sentences designed to antagonize third countries, and bound to cause insult, for example: “Few of the less-developed nations provide fertile soil for democracy in any meaningful sense.”<sup>5</sup>

FM 30-31B wasn’t designed just to embarrass the United States. The forgery was a stroke of genius—and performed a veritable jujitsu move on the CIA. The disinformation artists of Service A effectively managed to redefine far-left, anti-American militants as American puppets, creating a self-radicalizing, positive feedback loop: violently resisting American power would only prove the strength of American power, and thus trigger more violent resistance. The conceptual trick came on page 11, under the heading “Agents in Special Operations”: “There may be times when [host country] governments show passivity or indecision in face of Communist or Communist-inspired subversion, and react with inadequate vigor to intelligence estimates transmitted by U.S. agencies.”

In short, the United States wanted its allies to crack down on radical leftists when told to do so. The document continued:

Such situations are particularly likely to arise when the insurgency seeks to achieve tactical advantage by temporarily refraining from violence, thus lulling [host country] authorities into a state of false security.

Moderate militants were even more dangerous than raging radicals, the faux manual implied. Next came the instruction for U.S. troops:

In such cases, the U.S. Army intelligence must have the means of launching special operations which will convince [host country]

governments and public opinion of the reality of the insurgent danger and of the necessity of counteraction.

The United States needed to convince gullible allies that they were in danger of political violence by *engaging* in political violence:

To this end, U.S. Army intelligence should seek to penetrate the insurgency by means of agents on special assignment, with the task of forming special action groups among the core radical elements of the insurgency. When the kind of situation envisioned above arises, these groups, acting under U.S. Army intelligence control, should be used to launch violent or nonviolent actions according to the nature of the case.<sup>6</sup>

The fake document concluded “by order of the Secretary of the Army,” and was signed by the U.S. Army chief of staff, W. C. Westmoreland.

The KGB’s fantastic forgery provided a twisted but appealing rationale for why the CIA would secretly engage in far-left terrorist attacks. In one sweep the forged document would also render American denials incredible, at least among those who were becoming more and more critical of America’s global engagement and the spread of military bases overseas. The disinformation masterpiece laid the groundwork for one of the most pernicious and persistent conspiracy theories of the twentieth century.

Supplement B would soon be put to work.

In the summer of 1974, Turkey invaded Cyprus, its neighbor and fellow NATO member. The crisis called the close military cooperation and assistance between Turkey and the United States into question, all as Turkey began to experience a bout of domestic political violence. Then, in late March 1975,<sup>7</sup> a Turkish magazine, *Bariş*, carried a major news story about a mysterious U.S. Army manual, titled “Field Manual 30-31, Stability Operations—Intelligence,” dated January 1970. *Bariş* implied that the U.S. government was secretly using its foreign military bases to orchestrate political violence in friendly countries, and began to serialize the secret “Supplement B” to the insurgency manual. The magazine treated the fake manual as a blueprint for American interference in Turkish affairs, and

included a piecemeal translation of the full document in a detailed 46-part series that ran daily. Still, despite the publicity in Turkey, the story soon subsided.

Over the following year, American military assistance in the Philippines increased drastically. The United States had stationed nearly 13,700 military personnel on bases there. On September 14, 1976, the mysterious insurgency manual resurfaced. An anonymous, self-described “concerned citizen” in Thailand left a photocopy of the top-secret supplement to FM 30-31B at the Philippines Embassy in Bangkok, where a janitor found it early in the morning of September 16. The embassy, confused by the sudden appearance of a top-secret American document, passed the document complete with envelope and cover letter to the U.S. embassy in Bangkok. The letter was addressed to Ferdinand Marcos, president of the Philippines, and was supposedly written by an American whistle-blower in Thailand. The letter obliquely referred to “some secret American documents revealing the dangers of the countries concerned of having U.S. troops and advisers stationed on their territories.”<sup>8</sup> The alleged source justified the leak of classified material in the last paragraph: “I am doing this as one of an American group opposed to excessive U.S. military involvement in matters beyond the scope of reasonable American interest.” The letter did not refer to the earlier surfacing in *Barış*.

Two years later, in the fall of 1978, the document appeared once again, this time in Spain. The country had just overcome the dictatorship of Francisco Franco, and a bitter debate on whether to join NATO was beginning to divide the country. The Soviet Union was gravely concerned that the incorporation of Spain into NATO could alter the balance of power in Europe. A Cuban intelligence officer shopped the full document, and an accompanying article, to news outlets in Madrid. *El Triunfo*, a far-left weekly magazine with links to the Spanish Communist Party, printed the translated FM 30-31B along with an article by Fernando Gonzalez, a member of the Spanish Communist Party in close contact with a KGB-linked officer at the Soviet embassy in Madrid. Gonzalez used the document as evidence that the United States was deeply involved with radical terrorist groups in Western Europe, and specifically named the Italian Red Brigades as an example, including the infamous “Moro

affair”—a dramatic incident that began six months before *El Triunfo* printed the KGB forgery.

On March 16, 1978, a dozen members of Italy’s most notorious terrorist group, the Red Brigades, blocked the path of two cars, one carrying Aldo Moro, the head of Italy’s main conservative party, the Christian Democrats. The attackers mowed down Moro’s five bodyguards with machine guns and kidnapped the politician. The police found 710 bullet casings at the scene. Moro had been on his way to the prime minister in order to request a vote of confidence for Italy’s first Communist-supported government in more than thirty years. Italy was immediately seized by crisis.

Radio Moscow pounced. Hours after Moro’s kidnapping, the station’s English-language shortwave broadcast called the abduction a “crime of reaction,” and darkly hinted at many “attempts by a right-wing force to aggravate the situation in Italy.” Two days later, in an Italian-language broadcast, Radio Moscow alleged, in contradiction of the established facts, that the kidnapping was “prepared by internal and international reactionary forces.” In another broadcast two days later, Radio Moscow quoted *L’Humanité*, a French Communist Party newspaper, reporting—again without evidence—that the real culprits of the abduction were “secret services whose activity is connected with the NATO military base in Naples.” Then, on April 2, with Moro still abducted and alive: “Well, to call a spade a spade, that service behind the kidnapping is called the Central Intelligence Agency.”<sup>9</sup>

The prolonged crisis, exacerbated by pictures of Moro appearing in the press and one false claim that he had been killed, offered fertile ground for conspiracy theories. Over time, many Italians came to believe that the Red Brigades weren’t actually red, but black—that is, they weren’t Communist, but secretly Fascist. TASS, the Soviet Union’s official news agency, encouraged this line of thinking by claiming that the Red Brigades were only operating under a mask of leftism, that they had outside help, and that the operation’s real goal was to induce a rightward shift. On May 9, Moro’s bullet-riddled body was found under a blanket in the trunk of a red Renault R-4 parked halfway between the Christian Democrat and the Communist Party headquarters in Rome.<sup>10</sup>

So, when *El Triunfo* printed FM 30-31B, Italy held the most important audience.<sup>11</sup> To many Italians, the field manual finally offered documentary

evidence of a spy plot. The Milan-based weekly *L'Europeo*, left-leaning and often sharply critical of the United States, published detailed excerpts and pictures of the forged documents that the magazine's editors considered "absolutely authentic."<sup>12</sup> "In the Moro case we are talking more and more about an international conspiracy," *L'Europeo* reported,<sup>13</sup> arguing that Italy was currently in phase two of an armed insurrection, marked by an expansion of criminal acts and selective terrorism, according to the sequencing of the U.S. manual.

As soon as the piece came out, *L'Europeo*'s publisher, Giovanni Valentini, received a letter from the U.S. embassy in Rome. An American diplomat told him that publishing the document would be "inopportune."<sup>14</sup> Valentini, convinced that the document was genuine, printed a second article, along with the embassy's letter.<sup>15</sup> Attempting to contain the spreading conspiracy theory, the State Department wrote in its letter that the document was fake: "The article published in *Triunfo* assumed the existence of a 'supplement' to U.S. Army Field Manual FM 30-31, an unclassified publication. Such a supplement has never existed," a U.S. Foreign Service officer explained to Valentini, making a mistake that would soon backfire in the United States. Supplement B may not have been genuine, but Supplement A was real.

The conspiracy theory only spread from there. In December 1978, the *World Marxist Review* hinted that the CIA had secretly used the Red Brigades or instigated them to assassinate Moro. "There arises the suspicion that the 'Red Brigades' (or those who manipulate them in Italy) are pro-Fascist organizations skillfully camouflaged as 'reds,'" the Marxists wrote. "A few months later this was confirmed by a secret document which appeared in an October issue of the journal *L'Europeo*." The forgery and subsequent claims were so convincing that several foreign governments made inquiries to the U.S. government, and the Italian Senate launched an investigation. So far, the full forgery had not been published in English.

Then, one day in late 1978, the U.S.-based team of the new *Covert Action Information Bulletin* was approached by a potential source. Three editors, William Schaap, Ellen Ray, and Louis Wolf, met with an unnamed man just outside Washington. The anonymous "whistle-blower," as Wolf termed him, said he worked for the U.S. Army and that he had experience in the area of "destabilization," in counterinsurgency, and that he had seen

enough. The man was wearing civilian clothes, but from the manner in which he spoke, Wolf recalled, the editors inferred that their source was “clearly a man of the military.” He mentioned Field Manual 30-31, and then offered the full Supplement B to the activists.

Ray, Schaap, and Wolf were intrigued. So far they had published only two issues of the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*, and they were keen to break news to make a name for their journal. The setup was too good to be true. “We were afraid to ask too many questions,” Wolf commented later, “because we were concerned not to get the document.”<sup>16</sup>

Eventually the mysterious source handed over the document, and the editors busied themselves with trying to confirm the top-secret material at hand. “We read that thing six ways to Sunday and back,” Wolf remembered. They decided to publish the full English version in their third issue, albeit transcribed and not in the original layout.

FM 30-31B represents a turning point in the history of disinformation, a moment when active measures became fully activated. Disinformation operations rely upon tactics that exploit technology, political divisions, and tensions between allies. Political fissures and friction are a function of the target. The design of the divisive material and the craftsmanship of disinformation are a function of the attacker. The technological substrate and the available media platforms are a function of the operational environment. The higher the quality of all three, the more active a measure will be—or, put another way, the lesser the political divisions within the target organization, and the more primitive the telecommunications environment, the more value the attacker will have to add at all stages of an operation in order to make and sustain an active measure.

FM 30-31B, therefore, can be seen as an important high-water mark in the history of active measures. The Vietnam War had introduced new and deep divisions into American society specifically and the West more generally. Ellsberg, Fellwock, and even Agee were radicalized by America’s conduct on the battlefield in Southeast Asia. The rise of improved printing technology and then the personal computer was starting to make community organization and new media creation easier than ever, as illustrated by the Fifth Estate, *Counterspy*, and the *Covert Action Information Bulletin*. The *Bulletin*’s publication of the forgery was

accompanied by an equally masterful piece of investigative conspiracy theory.

“Is the document genuine?” William Schaap asked. He then offered the following explanation for why he and the other editors believed it to be so:

When the document was referred to in Turkey, there was no response from the U.S. When it was published in full in Spain, there was no response. When the [U.S.] Embassy heard that it was to be published in Italy, they informed the publisher of a major magazine [*L'Europeo*] that it would be “inopportune” to do so, and when it appeared that it would nevertheless be published, the Embassy announced that the document was a forgery—in a letter which said there was “no” supplement to FM 30-31, a statement which was itself untrue.<sup>17</sup>

All this was correct. Schaap concluded that it was “hard to imagine” that the document was not genuine, and added that “we believe, as do publishers in several other countries already, that the document is real.”<sup>18</sup> The entrepreneurial activists had added real value to an existing active measure, and improved its performance.

Only months after the original FM 30-31B had finally been published in Washington, the KGB continued to put the manual to work abroad. But elsewhere, activism was not yet as helpful as it was in the United States. In the mid-1970s, Portugal had finally overcome dictatorship, and was turning toward the West. In the summer of 1979, Soviet officers prepared Portuguese-language translations of FM 30-31B, and started covertly circulating the manual among military officers in Lisbon.

The impact of the *Covert Action Information Bulletin* did not stop there. Louis Wolf, one of the editors, was a conscientious objector who said that the napalm bombings of the Laotian villages where he labored in the 1960s had pushed him over the edge into activism.<sup>19</sup> A decade later, he focused on researching the names to expose. His work ethic bordered on the obsessive. Wolf’s apartment was a ten-minute walk from the National Archives, where, for the better part of five years, he spent eight to ten hours a day researching names in various diplomatic registers, retracing the careers of American diplomats, devoting a couple of hours to each name. Wolf owned

a worn copy of *Who's Who in CIA*, but, he said, “we didn’t put too much stock in the Mader book.”<sup>20</sup> Instead, Wolf used a methodology laid out in an infamous article published in a Washington magazine, titled “How to Spot a Spook,” from 1974.<sup>21</sup>

On July 2, 1980, at a news conference in Kingston, Jamaica, Wolf mentioned some of the names he had researched in the National Archives.<sup>22</sup> Jamaican television rebroadcast the details, including addresses, telephone numbers, license plates, and the names of fourteen alleged CIA officers at the Kingston station, shortly thereafter.

Two days later, three men attacked the home of Richard Kinsman, a U.S. embassy official. The would-be assassins fired twenty .45-caliber bullets from a submachine gun about one hundred feet away, hitting the concrete walls of Kinsman’s house. The attackers also detonated a grenade on the front lawn. Kinsman, who was at home, was unhurt.<sup>23</sup> The attack came only forty-eight hours after Wolf’s televised press conference. The *Covert Action Information Bulletin* had named Kinsman—likely correctly<sup>24</sup>—as the CIA’s Jamaica station chief in its October 1979 issue.

Activism and active measures became harder and harder to tell apart.