

# Canadian security

by John Starnes

The Kellock-Taschereau Royal Commission was set up in the wake of the defection of Igor Gouzenko from the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa. Its revelation, in 1946 that there was evidence of widespread espionage activities in Canada had a profound effect upon the way Canada treated security questions thereafter. The RCMP, which had been responsible for dealing with Axis spies and saboteurs during World War II was called upon in 1946 to cope with this new and largely unsuspected threat from the Soviet Union and its allies. Gradually the RCMP increased its resources and improved its methods for dealing effectively with the different threat posed by Communist subversion.

At the same time the government moved to establish better means of vetting employees with access to sensitive information. Criteria were drawn up for establishing, among other things, what political views and associations of individuals could be considered grounds for firing, transfer to less sensitive positions or denial of employment in the civil service. Not surprisingly a degree of conflict arose between the rights and civil liberties of individuals and the duty of the government to protect the state from those who might seek to subvert it. The conflict was sharply illustrated by a number of cases which occurred while Lester B. Pearson was Minister for External Affairs and subsequently Prime Minister.

Pearson became convinced that a review of the government's security procedures and practices was desirable. In the third volume of his memoirs, *Mike*, he wrote:

When I became Prime Minister we changed our entire security structure. I had no quarrel from my experience of those earlier days with the conduct of Canadian security affairs. I found the RCMP men with whom I had anything to do reasonable and understanding. They did not have the traditional secret police image. Still, I was not satisfied with the machinery, especially the procedure for appeal, and I tried to improve it. I did not like our very close association with security agencies in other countries, especially with the FBI. But we were close allies, doing intelligence work together, as well as security, and it was difficult to refuse to pass on information we possessed. I often thought, however, that this collaboration could get us into trouble. I think that the procedure was abused at times, especially on immigration questions where, again, there was not enough effective protection for the rights of the individual. The quality of the information that was gathered also worried me, but I am sure this was characteristic of all police evidence. I used to say when I was going through

some of it, "Now look, how do you know that this might mean anything at all?" "Well," the security people said, "we have to weigh and evaluate it. However ridiculous the information may seem, we take it all down and then we try to evaluate it." I would hate to trust my future, in a pinch, to any security man's evaluation, no matter how honest and sincere he might be, when there is no appeal from it and when you cannot see the evidence against you.

## Three important facts

Three important facts about the maintainance of internal security in Canada which must be stated as preface to further discussion. First, Canada does not have and never has had an "offensive intelligence service" capable of operating outside Canada for the collection of intelligence and the furtherance of Canadian government objectives. Although a good theoretical case can be made for such a service, the fact is we do not have such a capability and we are quite unlikely to have it in the foreseeable future. Second, many Canadians do not perceive that they are threatened by foreign espionage activities, international terrorism or the activities of groups and individuals in Canada working to subvert the system. Third, successive Canadian governments, over many years, have never learned the knack of using effectively information derived from intelligence and security sources. In particular they have often failed to take sufficient account of such information in the formulation of foreign, defence, trade and security policies.

The fact that there is no agency capable of gathering secret intelligence in other countries makes the service charged with protecting Canada from activities such as espionage and international terrorism very dependent upon friends and allies. It places a premium upon being able to maintain close associations with security and intelligence agencies in other countries. Pearson may have disliked this but he appeared to recognize that it was necessary if Canada was to deal effectively with activities as unusual as espionage and terrorism. It is not possible in any field of endeavour requiring cooperation with other countries, to escape paying the price for that cooperation. If we

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*John Starnes is a former Canadian diplomat and was the first civilian Director General of the RCMP Security Service. He is the author of the spy trilogy *The Dissemblers* a three-volume series with the titles *Deep Sleepers*, *Scarab*, and *Orion's Belt*, published by Balmuir Books in Ottawa.*