

## Chapter 19

### **Creating Fear in Europe and America. There Were Some American Spies, Where is Noel Field ?**

As Noel Field searched for a new career the Soviet's purges in Eastern Europe, the Berlin Blockage, and suspected espionage were creating fear in the West. At the same time, within the Soviet sphere's paranoia about spies was leading to hostility to all foreigners. The Soviets vastly overestimated the amount of Western covert work in Europe during the 1940s, but there were some operations that, if known, would have fed the rise of the Eastern bloc's extreme version of McCarthyism that accompanied its drive to eliminate all political opposition.<sup>1</sup>

The Americans did not have a large covert program but under President Truman's 1947 Containment policy the remnants of the United States' Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and State Department's intelligence groups, and later the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), secretly funneled money to shape elections in independent nations such as Italy, Greece, and France. The United States went further than Containment when it established Radio Free Europe and the Voice of America to broadcast propaganda to undermine existing Communist regimes.

There were only a few truly cloak-and-dagger-like operations by the United States and Britain during the early postwar period, partly because the Western allies feared actions that might lead to war. When their intelligence groups were leaving the satellite countries after the World War II some of them created underground "stay behind" organization to provide intelligence and, if needed, aid to resistance movements. The United States' OSS had one in Rumania that led to a failed 1947 coup. The Americans also joined the British in an attempt to

overthrow Albania 's Communist government that began in 1947 leading to a disastrous invasion in 1950. There were attempts to infiltrate agents into the Soviet Union and some satellite nations but most were immediate and embarrassing failures that served only to amplify the Soviet's paranoia. When an opportunity arose the United States' army's Counter Intelligence Corps exfiltrated a few endangered satellite politicians. More worrisome to the Soviets, by 1949 the United States began secretly training men in displaced persons camps to be used as guerillas if war broke out. Those attempts were never secret because of "leaks" by the trainees.

### **The Pond and Noel's Reputation**

We await a comprehensive history of all allied postwar intelligence operations in the Eastern bloc but, surprisingly, much is now available about the early postwar activities of a small American intelligence agency, one that was unknown until recently. During and after World War II John (Frenchy) Grombach of "The Pond" was the leader of the American intelligence agency in contact with more conservative and moderate European exiles, businessmen, and diplomats than the United States' other intelligence groups.<sup>2</sup> The Pond organization was a very secret unit created by the army and State Department in 1942 because of their distrust of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and its many left-wing operatives. Since the formation of the Pond Grombach had battled what he saw as widespread Communist influences in the OSS, the State Department, and even America's military intelligence agencies. His anger grew after Raoul Wallenberg's 1946 disappearance, especially because Grombach was one of the American agents facilitating Wallenberg's rescue of endangered Hungarian Jews. Grombach correctly guessed the Soviets kidnapped Wallenberg and predicted the Eastern Bloc's nations were going to be purged of all but the most ideologically pure. As early as 1946, Grombach ordered the postwar remnants of his organization to rescue those in danger in countries like Hungary, and to establish

radio nets in the Eastern bloc. While the OSS was being dismantled and the new CIA not yet active Frenchy's men acted. At the same time, Grombach began an important, but behind-the-scenes, anti-Communist crusade in America. Noel Field's life was touched by Grombach, although indirectly through Frenchy's anti-Communism.

Grombach always had influential friends in Europe as well as America. His family's many foreign connections, his year as a military attaché in Paris, and his role as a leader in the international Olympics led him to be a confidant of the types of European royals and politicians that Noel's father Herbert had courted during his rounds of international fund-raising in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries. And Grombach was an ally of the leaders of major international corporations such as Philips of the Netherlands that continued to do business throughout Europe World War II.. Noel's activities during his years at the League of Nations, and while he was with the Unitarian's relief organization, had been noted by Grombach's social contacts. Leaders of major European corporations, and Grombach's diplomatic confidants, such as the American State Department's Robert Murphy, had also noticed Noel's actions. As a result, rumors about Noel had reached Grombach in the late 1930s. They increased in number and seriousness during the war. Grombach was not a man to keep such secrets, secret.<sup>3</sup>

By 1947, Grombach was publicly attacking those Americans he considered to be on the left. While running Cold War underground networks that gathered intelligence in Hungary, and that rescued socialists from the purges of 1947, Grombach began to denounce the (OSS) and its Allen Dulles (Noel's controller in Switzerland). Grombach fought the attempt to put Dulles and his liberal allies in control of a permanent version of the OSS, the CIA. Dulles and all his friends, Grombach declared, were being soft on Reds in Germany, France, and Eastern Europe. Grombach was also one of the first to assert that some of the most important men in the

American intelligence community of World War II, such as Duncan Lee of the OSS, had been Soviet “helpers.”<sup>4</sup> Grombach’s efforts had an impact on America’s government. His accusations drove the head of Army Intelligence out of office. Grombach was also becoming a major source of information for political leaders concerned about Communism in America.

Grombach was expanding his anti-Red campaign as Noel Field was trying to establish a new life in Europe. Grombach’s contacts in the Eastern bloc were supplying details of how Hungary and other liberated areas were being taken-over by the type of men Noel had aided. Grombach soon became a major source of information and support for a rising American political crusader, Senator Joseph McCarthy, who soon launched the most publicized and emotional Communist investigations the nation ever experienced.

McCarthy’s extreme anti-Communist actions led Edward R. Murrow, the long-time friend and mentor of the Noel’s best friend Laurence Duggan, to launch a counter crusade. Murrow used his new position as the nation’s leading radio, then television, newsman to attack all anti-Communism. Murrow was soon joined by other noted liberals such as Archibald MacLeish, and his and the Field’s close friend May Sarton, in condemning the un-American Activities Committee and McCarthy.<sup>5</sup>

Grombach’s allegations were gaining credibility though the work of other intelligence groups.<sup>6</sup> In the United States, the FBI was giving more attention to international Communist and Soviet espionage activities. By the late 1940s, it was evident that more than information on State and Commerce Department polices had been passed to the Soviets. There had been an espionage group in New York City whose achievements were so sensitive that Noel and others in his Washington circle knew nothing of them. The group stole atomic bomb plans and sent the secrets of the most advanced radar and electronic equipment to Russia. Worries increased as America’s

codebreakers uncovered a Communist informer within the most secret section of their headquarters. Then, the discovery that Communists had infiltrated Australia's intelligence agencies led to America's codebreakers ending a long-standing collaboration. And to the great worry of America's military, at the end of 1948 something ominous was happening: The Soviets were changing all their codes and ciphers. That was usually a prelude to military action.<sup>7</sup> The intelligence community's failure to predict the Soviet's atomic-bomb success added to the concerns. The FBI even feared there was a Communist agent in the White House. America was primed to worry about spies and traitors by 1948.

### **Intelligence and Noel's Adversaries**

Intelligence work was not confined to government agencies. Francis Henson, Arthur Schlesinger, Albert Jolis and Jay Lovestone, Noel's long-time antagonists, were involved with organizations that were becoming important to America's intelligence agencies during the Cold War. Henson, Schlesinger and Jolis were associated with the postwar version of Sheba Strunsky's International Rescue Committee that helped in liberating dissidents and the channeling of secret funds to independent political parties. Lovestone and his ally Irving Brown had a more immediate impact as they used American Federation of Labor monies and contacts to undercut Communist unions in Europe.

### **Anywhere Safe to Go? Between a Rock and a Hard Place**

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By late 1948, Noel, although not fully aware of the depths of the American anti-Communist movements, American leaders felt threatened by spies, so did the Eastern bloc's leaders. Noel did not realize it but he was in a "rock-and-hard-place" situation. Both East and West were primed to treat him as a spy, he did not realize he had no safe haven. Noel was so afraid of the American situation that when he learned he might be ordered back to the United States to testify

at government hearings concerning his friends Alger Hiss and Laurence Duggan he let it be known that he would refuse to return. Tellingly, he also rebuffed a direct plea from Hiss' defense lawyer to fly back to America to help Alger.<sup>8</sup>

But he unaware of the situation in the East as he resumed his search for a permanent job in Eastern Europe. He believed it was the only place where he could be safe. He made frequent trips to see the Communist friends he helped during the war, not realizing they was under great danger of being purged. In turn, Herta, now overly emotional, suspected that American agents would kidnap Noel and send him back to the United States to face congress and the FBI unless he immediately found a safe-haven.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Suspicious American Generosity, More Paranoia in the East, the Cold War Gets Hot**

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The generous American Marshall Plan for European economic recovery, which supplemented billions of dollars of previous grants and credits, came with some politically sensitive requirements that intensified the Soviet's fears of an Eastern Europe independent of and perhaps hostile to Russia. Recipients of Marshall Plan aid were to become part of an all-Europe open economy and were to allow the plan's advisors to help determine the nature of recovery programs. Several Eastern nations seriously considered joining the plan. That interfered with the Soviet's strategy for building a closed and self-sufficient economic and defense bloc. Moscow was angry and frightened. Stalin launched a counteroffensive. It included setting-up the Soviet's own economic aid and integration organization (COMECON); increasing the ruthless political purges in the nations that seemed enticed by the American offer; and initiating a widespread sabotage program that led to sinking merchant ships unloading supplies in European ports.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, there was widespread anger about one aspect of America's proposed economic recovery program. As part of the reconstruction effort, President Truman's advisors gave the

highest priority to rebuilding West Germany's economy. Washington's policy makers believed that unless Germany resumed its industrial production the other European economies would remain starved for manufacturing's basics. Because of the mid-1947 commitment to restart Germany's heavy industries there was a revival of the old worries over German domination of Europe. The fears were intense led and to many old Reds like Noel and Herta becoming more committed to the Cause.

### **The Liberal Establishment Endangered, the Duggan Connection Again, More Emotional Burdens**

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However, Noel and Herta had been too emotionally drained since 1947 to launch any campaigns. Neither of them was ready to assume additional emotional burdens. But a personal problem arose they could not ignore. A very close friend was becoming more of a public target in America's anti-Communist investigations: Laurence Duggan, who had become one of the most important men in liberal America. During the 1930s, Laurence and his wife Helen Boyd lived in the same apartment house as Noel and Herta and the couples saw each other every day. As Laurence shot- up in the ranks of the State Department he and Helen moved to a home in the Washington suburbs where they hosted the area's intellectual set, with an emphasis on those on the left. Their guests included the Massings, the Soviet recruiters. By 1936, Hede Massing had convinced Laurence to do more than talk about social justice. Although afraid of exposure, Laurence began feeding State Department information to his Communist controllers. He then helped bring Noel Field into Hede's network.<sup>11</sup>

Laurence did more. He became involved in an infamous international affair when he offered to supply information about Trotsky, Stalin's great enemy, who had fled to safety in Mexico. Laurence was a good friend of the artist Diego Rivera who was hosting Trotsky. On a

trip to Mexico, Duggan he visited them, later reporting Trotsky had little influence there. Duggan did not leave a record of his reaction to Trotsky's assassination three years later But evidence shows that Laurence continued his Soviet intelligence work during the 1930s, and not just through Hede Massing. He had Soviet code-names, "19," then "Frank", and finally, "Prince."

Duggan's contributions to his controllers were sometimes valuable, sometimes not, and he frequently tried to end his role as an informant. He always had a deep unease about being caught and dishonored and by the end of the 1930s he was terrified. At times, he believed the American government was tapping his phone, that the FBI was following him, and that the State Department's security officer, Adolf Berle, was blocking his career. He was so anxious that before he consented to recruit Noel for espionage work in the mid-1930s he told his Soviet controller that he was terribly frightened that Noel Field might learn of his clandestine work. If he did, Laurence intimated, Noel would expose him because Noel was under suspicion and was a person who would reveal secret under pressure. Laurence was so concerned he stopped meeting with his controllers.

Perhaps because of that Duggan's career did not suffer. In 1940, although there was some concern about his politics, the State Department made him the head of the South and Central American section and he became a personal advisor for the Secretary of State about the region. Surprisingly, Laurence considered that somewhat of demotion, one perhaps caused by his growing reputation as being too liberal. However, he continued to argue for progressive causes both at home and abroad. That, and his new access to the secretary, motivated the Soviets to re-activate him as an agent. Duggan responded to the overture and agreed to meet with a controller and, remarkably, to do so at the elite's Cosmos Club in Washington. The 1940 meeting was

congenial, with Duggan reaffirming his belief in the cause, but he declined to become fully active again because of his fear of exposure and because he felt he could supply little of value. The Soviets had to accept that, but they did not stop trying to convince Duggan to resume contributing. In 1942, they considered blackmailing him. Laurence remained sympathetic to the cause but usually passive, even after he resigned from the State Department in 1944. Adolf Berle may have asked for the resignation because of his growing worries about Communist influence in the department. Laurence took a position with UNRRA, the international relief organization, but soon assumed the leadership of his father's International Institute for Education (IEE).

### **Dangers at the Very Top of the Liberal Establishment**

As Laurence was settling into his new office, worries about Soviet espionage, past and present, and Stalin's expansionist intentions multiplied in the West. George Kennan, Noel Field's State Department friend from the 1930s wrote influential studies picturing Russia as a power-hungry nation to be contained. That was in contrast to Noel's view of Russia as a force for social reform.<sup>12</sup>

Then, others in America's 'liberal establishment's leaders became objects of suspicion. Several were close to the Hintons and Fields. Owen Lattimore the Asian expert, and Robert Oppenheimer of the University of California at Berkeley who had led America's wartime atomic bomb project were among them.<sup>13</sup> After World War II, Oppenheimer became a darling of America's intelligentsia. He moved to the Carnegie-Flexner fabled Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton University to replace Frank Aydellote, the man who had modernized the Quaker's Swarthmore College. The Institute was home to many of the European intellectuals rescued before World War II by groups led by the likes of Laurence Duggan's father Stephen. Oppenheimer became close to many of them. He also became a leading advocate for the

internationalization of atomic technology and supported the atomic bomb project's 'scientists who formed the Federation of Atomic Scientists which hoped to prevent more bombing. That roused the suspicions of those in charge of the security of the nation's atomic programs.

The actions of one of the older generation of influential liberals, Stephen Duggan, added to the concerns about the loyalty of the elite Eastern liberals. He was writing articles in support of the United Nations and its cultural arm UNESCO (the new version of the League's old and moribund Committee for Intellectual Cooperation). He denounced nationalism and began recommending "politically correct" policies such as cleansing all textbooks of any negative statements about groups or nations.<sup>14</sup>

By late 1948, the intensifying pressures on America's liberals, including two of his friends, reaffirmed Noel's belief that a return to America was unsafe—at least until "the reactionaries" had ended their attacks. As Noel was making his newest European plans his friend Alger Hiss was under the threat of imprisonment after being named as part of Harold Ware's group. Worse, in December Laurence Duggan "fell" to his death from the window of his sixteenth floor IEE office just four days before Christmas. The death came immediately after Duggan testified about his Communist activities (he also was member of the Ware group) during the 1930s. Some believed his death was murder. If so, had the "right" or the "left" committed it? The members of the Soviet's intelligence apparatus, who were trying to renew their contacts with him at the time, believed his death was a suicide caused by his fears of the exposure of his work for them. His demise was a great disappointment to agents because they hoped to use his IEE to gain the travel documents needed by their intelligence assets. They also hoped to use Duggan to identify possible American operatives using the IIE as a cover.<sup>15</sup>

Duggan's death caused an unprecedented uproar among America's East Coast liberals. Edward R. Murrow, whose newsmen had already criticized the Truman Doctrine for being a cause of Soviet-American frictions, took to the airways to lambaste the congressional investigatory committee. Sumner Welles, Duggan's State Department mentor and a long-time advocate of better relations with Russia and Latin America expressed his doubts that Duggan's death was accidental or a suicide. Archibald MacLeish, the chief of the Library of Congress, friend of May Sarton, and a behind-the-scenes Office of Strategic Services man during World War II quickly composed and published a poem, "The Black Day," that more than scolded America for its treatment of Laurence.<sup>16</sup>

### **One Can Never, Never Go Home Again: Noel A Man Almost Without a Country**

Newspapers across America covered Duggan's death and its aftermath. How many details Noel knew about Hiss and Duggan's work for Soviet intelligence remains unknown, but his reactions to Hiss' problems and Laurence Duggan's strange death are clear: He became overwrought.

Although Noel had been travelling while gathering information for his proposed work on reconstruction in Eastern Europe (and exploring possible job opportunities) he was aware of the un-American activities hearings, partly because Hermann, his brother, had passed-on warnings, including one that it would be best for Noel to put-off a return to the United States because of his health and the political situation.<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Noel's name had begun to appear in more national and international newspapers. Accusations of Noel's Communist ties were no longer confined to the Unitarians battles and his accusers were not just the likes of Henson and Schlesinger. Then, in October 1948 he received a letter from Alger Hiss with details about Whitaker Chamber's August accusations against himself and Noel. Hiss included a copy of the

House un-American Activities Committee testimony, as well as Hiss' condemnation of Chamber's charges as the product of a deranged man.

Hiss proclaimed his and Noel's total innocence and hoped that the charges would soon be dropped, but he cautioned Noel about a "growing frenzy" in America.<sup>18</sup> Hiss was not alone in declaring his complete innocence. Noel, in a 1949 letter to his own brother written, like Hiss', in anticipation that it would be read by the United States' authorities, stated that all the charges against him were "fabrications". He added that the only reason he did not make a public refutation of them was that any comment by him would just stir-up more "anti-progressive" troublemakers.<sup>19</sup>

### **Desperate Times**

Soon, Noel received another warning from his friends : The United States government was determined to recall him and force him to testify,. The situation became tense when the State Department informed him it might not renew his passport or the visas that allowed him to remain in Europe. Herta panicked. Noel believed the threat was in retaliation for his again declaring he would refuse to honor any order to return.

Noel's situation was dire. If the United States refused to extend his visas and passport, for whatever reason, he faced either returning to America to face a possible trial or becoming a stateless person. He believed his only hope was to find another country that would grant him residency and work. He was also becoming convinced that countries in Western Europe would never give him citizenship and, if needed, immunity. A country in East behind the Iron Curtain once again seemed his only recourse. He began planning to contact Eastern European leaders he aided during the war, now for more than just help with his research. There was a problem

regarding that: Would the United States government allow him to travel, and would the Eastern countries allow him entry?

Noel was in a hurry late 1948 as he began telling friends he was now seriously considering starting a totally new life in the East.<sup>20</sup> Noel already had some indications from his World War II Hungarian contacts that a position as a well-paid professor might be found for him in Hungary if he earned the necessary academic credentials there or in Czechoslovakia. Although Noel was aware of some political turmoil in the East after Yugoslavia's Tito rejected Soviet dictates, and while he knew of the indications that some good Communists were being purged in the satellite states, Noel was more than tempted by the college offer. Without telling the American authorities, he signaled his friends in the East he would accept such a job and a new permanent home in their prosperous country.

While he was on a long visit in Prague, Czechoslovakia Noel was granted a temporary "save" in October when he was issued a new American passport.<sup>21</sup> He was convinced; however, the Americans would soon cancel the documents he needed for his continued travel and he believed the United States' explanation for the impending cancellation of his permits was part of a plot. He did not accept the official explanation that the tensions between East and West were too dangerous to allow anyone a continuation of the type of broad sojourn visa the State Department issued when Noel was with the Unitarian Service Committee. The government did have genuine concerns about the safety of Americans in the East but also suspicions of the loyalty of anyone who spent much time there.

Noel did not give-in. He again pleaded with the State Department. It gave him the hint of another reprieve. He was told that he might be allowed a few months extension— but that was to be, it was intimated, the last.<sup>22</sup>

## **Friends? In The East**

Noel hurriedly contacted his Eastern bloc friends expecting they would come to his aid as they had in the past. They had helped him obtain interviews in 1947 and in early 1948. They also aided his collecting of a trunk-full of documents about their reconstruction efforts. But Noel was blind to the reality of Communist rule: Democracy in the bloc had given way to dictatorship and their economies were in shambles. Noel did not allow, for example, the worldwide coverage of the first round of ruthless political purges in Hungary to deter him, perhaps because a man he helped to secretly return to Budapest, Laszlo Rajk, led them.<sup>23</sup>

Rajk had a perfect Communist history. In the 1930s the Hungarian government dismissed him from his teaching post because of his extreme leftist views. He could not find work in Hungary so he became one of the many East Europeans who joined the COMINTERN's legions in Spain. While there and in French detention camps, he encountered and was helped by Noel. Unlike many others who stayed in France as refugees, Laszlo managed to migrate to Russia where he received special treatment. He was groomed to play a leading role in postwar Hungary to ensure that Communists dominated its government. The first step was the Soviet's making him the leader of the Communist underground during the last days of Germany's occupation of Hungary. Rajk and his followers played a central part in the massacre of thousands who supposedly had collaborated with the Nazis. Then, with great skill, Rajk took advantage of the chaos that erupted when the wartime Hungarian government collapsed. At first, he and the Soviet advisors avoided the appearance of creating a dictatorship. But anything like a multiparty government soon ended in Hungary--- as it did elsewhere in the East.<sup>24</sup>

Although Stalin thought Rajk was moving too quickly, and endangering relations with the Allies, in early 1947 the Soviets helped engineer the first of many rigged elections and political

cleansings in Hungary. Cleansings spread to Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Albania, and Czechoslovakia.<sup>25</sup> Yugoslavia had its own internal house cleaning. As a result, hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to the West for safety as the purges progressed. Meanwhile, Germany's Soviet sector was not allowed a chance for democracy.

### **Noel Still Wouldn't Recognize**

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Most of the purges, even the earlier ones of 1945 and 1946, were marked by violence. Kidnapping and torture were common. The postwar, anti-Communist hearings in the United States were minor episodes compared to what was happening in the East. The first round of purges was in fact, one of the motivations for the loyalty investigations in America, as well as for President Truman's acceptance of Kennan's Containment policy. In addition, the West was shocked when Russia continued to impose severe demands for reparations from the satellite nations. The Soviet demands included "intellectual reparations" as well as material and manpower--at levels far beyond what the Allies agreed to at the close of World War II. As a result, the economic burdens on the populations of the Eastern countries raised both sympathy and concern in the West—and expectations of revolts.

There was reason to revolt. Most of the Eastern bloc's population remained without adequate supplies of goods, or fuel, or food. Workers faced onerous conditions as the Communist governments demanded industrial production quotas above realistic levels. Farmers endured near confiscatory taxation. Along with the obvious turn against liberal political democracy came confiscation of church lands, the closing of church schools (Jewish, Protestant, Muslim, and Catholic), the formal establishment of atheism, a reappearance of anti-Semitism, and nationalization (without compensation) in most sectors of the economies. Every foreign corporation awaited punishment, if not seizure.

The Communist regimes did not confine repression to the citizens of the bloc nations. The Eastern intelligence agencies arrested representatives of international relief and religious organizations, such as the World Council of Churches, the International Rescue Committee, and the Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. Protestant ministers were imprisoned and charged as spies, simply because they had contacts with their international organizations. In 1948, after Yugoslavia's Tito declared his country would go its own socialist way, Soviet controls over all the bloc's governments intensified.

There was more that troubled the West. Astute foreign observers quickly concluded the Soviets were building their own imperialistic economic empire. All trade, no matter how damaging to a satellite, was to be to the benefit of Russia. The satellite governments jailed their own economic administrators if they made trade deals with Western nations—although Soviet products were inferior and more expensive. The Soviet's did not confine their imperialism to economics. The Western nations worried about a new Soviet submarine base in Albania, a Russian initiative to establish naval bases in Turkey, and a possible reinvigoration of Russia's plans for a dominating presence in Iran. In the context of such Soviet actions, its blockade of Berlin in mid-1948 appeared to be a prelude to a military confrontation.

But Noel did not attend to such things. As he made his late 1948 and early 1949 explorations, he acted as if his life was divorced from the realities of postwar Europe. He continued to think he was travelling in workers' paradises.

### **I Am Now and Have Always Been a Good Communist**

Perhaps that was because Noel was in such a panic about his and Herta's future. In late 1948, he felt his life had reached a tipping point. Despite the turmoil in the satellite nations, he once again contacted his friends in the East this time pleading with them for immediate, and paying,

employment, reminding them about the position as a college professor.<sup>26</sup> He then began yet another round of visits to the satellite countries, again failing to notice changes in the political climate. He ignored a strong hint in late 1948 when he attempted to obtain a long-term Czech visa. To his great surprise, he found it difficult to do so---despite all his personal connections, including Artur London, the Communist official. Noel was bewildered when Czech agents detained him in Prague's police station. His captors refused to give any reasons for their action. His confinement was the result of the intensifying suspicion of all Westerners, especially ones the Soviets thought had connections to the bloc's remaining liberals or to relief agencies.<sup>27</sup> Eastern intelligence officials were assuming all agencies were working with Western intelligence, including the Unitarian Relief Committee which continued sponsoring hospitals in the satellite nations.<sup>28</sup>

### **The Strange Confession**

Noel became desperate. Trying to save his and Herta's future, in direct contradiction to what he had written, even to his brother, he told the Czech authorities he and Alger Hiss had been Soviet assets during the 1930s!<sup>29</sup> Although suspicious, the Czechs granted Noel a visa but one good for only six months. Then, they contacted Moscow to verify his story about the 1930s and to explore accusations coming from recently purged officials in Hungary and their own country that Noel was an American agent.<sup>30</sup>

Noel resumed his travels and his search for a home and job. He visited Warsaw and Paris attempting to arrange his personal affairs and to gain more help from his leftist friends.<sup>31</sup> He became upset when he realized that because their American travel permits were ending, he and Herta might soon be forced to leave Switzerland. After returned to his apartment in Berne he began another series of trips in Europe. Then, just as his Czech visa was expiring, he went to

Prague in May 1949 in response to more news about the possible college position. What Noel did not know was that more accusations of his being an American (not a Soviet) spy were being leveled against him--and against his brother Hermann. Those allegations against Noel came from an unexpected source: A man Noel once helped and thought was a true friend had become a Communist leader in Czechoslovakia, but one suspected of deviationism. He was arrested. During his interrogations, he implied that Noel was a Western agent. Those allegations were on their way to Moscow as Noel prepared for his university post.<sup>32</sup> Noel remained unaware that the politics of the Soviet East were changing rapidly although many of his old contacts were so worried they refused to meet with foreign friends like Noel. Even Laszlo Rajk was arrested in May 1949. Noel's other Czech contacts, including the editor of that nation's most important Party newspaper, would soon face "extreme sanctions."<sup>33</sup>

### **Noel Disappears**

Within days after he arrived in Prague in early May 1949 Noel disappeared. The last seen of him was on the eleventh when two men escorted him from his hotel. Soon, there was a telegram from Bratislava by someone claiming to be Noel stating that he was on his way to Vienna. Nothing more was heard. Noel never returned for his belongings. Soon, a mysterious Mr. Kimel took them from Noel's hotel.

Noel had been chloroformed, handcuffed, put into a sack, then delivered like a caged animal to Hungary's intelligence agency. He was moved among several prisons for his initial brutal interrogations and soon put into permanent solitary confinement in a small filthy cell in a secret prison to face more torture and hear the cries of other victims.<sup>34</sup> Noel was not brought to trial and he was not executed. His forced secret confessions were to be used as critical evidence against political figures throughout the bloc. The satellites were to be cleansed of all

remaining “Titoist” agents of the West who had been, it was claimed, active in a complex plot involving Noel dating from the years of the Spanish Civil War and Noel’s relief work. At least three hundred politicians in the Eastern bloc were eliminated because of even a minor connection to Noel.

No word about Noel reached the West. When the American government made inquiries, the East’s governments denied knowledge of him. Even during the 1950s, the American government received nothing about Noel but rumors. Then, the *Daily Worker* reported he was somewhere in the East being tried as a spy. A defector claimed he was dead. Others reported him in the dreaded Lubyanka prison in Moscow.<sup>35</sup>

### **A Family of Prisoners**

Noel was not alone in becoming a “disappeared” person. In June 1949, a month after Noel’s disappearance a frantic Herta, thinking that Noel had been kidnapped by the United States’ Central Intelligence Agency, contacted Kate, Hermann Field’s wife, who was in London. Herta begged her to convince Hermann to begin a search for Noel. He did. But it took some time for him to begin. Hermann flew to Geneva, then to Prague with Herta in early August.<sup>36</sup> Seeking information from his and Noel’s Polish friends, Hermann quickly took a plane to Warsaw to follow-up other leads while Herta remained in Prague awaiting contact from she thought would be friendly Czechs. .

But, on August 29th, Herta was seized. . Like Noel, someone telegraphed that she was in Bratislava. But she had been rushed to Hungary and solitary confinement to spend five years under a regime that so strictly enforced silence she never knew that at one time she was a few feet from Noel. A week before that, the Polish authorities had seized Hermann while he was leaving Warsaw on his return to Prague. A year later, in August 1950, Erica, Noel’s foster

daughter, traveled from Switzerland to Berlin to make inquiries about Noel among the old Communist friends she knew from her courier, border-crossing, and German Party membership days. That was a courageous, foolish action as she had two young children, one just a few months old. Although having good political connections, Erica disappeared the day she took a cab from West to East Berlin.<sup>37</sup> Like Noel, Herta, and Hermann, she had travelled into a well-prepared trap. The day before she was taken prisoner the Communists had publicly denounced her and Leo Bauer, her contact, as East Germany launched its own round of purges of any officials who had ever had contact with the West or who showed signs of objecting to Soviet policies.

As in the search for Noel, the American State Department's months of repeated inquiries led to a uniform response about the other members of the Field clan: "no knowledge of their whereabouts." The frustrated American government began to think the four had defected.<sup>38</sup> They had not.

### **Where Is Noel Field? Who Is Not An American Spy?**

When his brutal interrogations and confinement first began, Noel declared his innocence in any plot against the Cause, but within a few weeks of severe mistreatment Noel began to "confess", at least by providing the names of over five hundred people from the East he had contacted while with the League of Nations and the Unitarian Service Committee, and, more important to his captors, the Office of Strategic Services.<sup>39</sup> Those lists helped identify any leader who had previous contact with the West, something that was now treated as a crime. Among the hundreds on the lists were the faithful and famous Lazo Rajk, Leo Bauer, Otto Katz, Willi Kreikemeyer, Artur London. and Rudolf Slansky.

After months of mistreatment, Noel began accepting parts of the fictitious scenario Soviet intelligence had devised: All of Noel and Hermann's activities since the mid-1930s had been part of a long-term plot by Americans to undermine the Cause. The argument the Soviets put forward was bizarre. They asserted that Noel helped the exiles of the 1930s and World War II just to build contacts for later spy networks, not because of his job with the humanitarian groups. They also claimed that Allen Dulles of the OSS supported the World War II Communist underground for the same reason; and, that Noel's postwar travel throughout the Eastern Bloc would have been possible only if the rich United States' intelligence arm, the Central Intelligence Agency, financed them. The Soviet's extended the same paranoia-based reasoning to Hermann, Herta, and Erica's activities. Under intense pressure Noel did begin to speculate that Allen Dulles had manipulated him when he aided the French resistance and the Free Germany group during the war. Yet, he seems never to have confessed to any direct and specific crimes against the Cause.<sup>40</sup>

Noel and Herta never revealed details of their imprisonment, but years later they told Joe Doob, Noel's brother-in-law, they were repeatedly tortured and that they would say anything they thought their interrogators wanted to hear to stop their suffering. Herta revealed that she had come close to going insane during her first year of imprisonment during which her isolation was so intense she created a family of children out of her bread ration and pretended to care for them. Like other long-term captives, she and Noel began identifying with their jailers. After their release, American visitors thought they might have succumbed to brain-washing.<sup>41</sup>

Others, including Hermann and Erica, did write about their treatment. In memoirs published before the United States reacted to Twenty First Century terrorism by water-boarding, isolation, and the use of deprivation techniques, and when some of its allies used sophisticated electrical

tortures, the revelations were appalling. Beatings on the body and feet, or hanging a woman by her hair, were not unusual. Total isolation, sleep deprivation, dehydration, frigid temperatures, and near starvation were typical. Hermann came near the edge of madness because of his isolation.<sup>42</sup>

Erica, who was shunted from East German to Soviet prisons and then to a Siberian slave-labor camp, was at times allowed only one meal every four days. Other prisoners were forced to drink heavily salted water, then denied any liquids. Causing exhaustion and muscle pain was a standby technique. Prisoners were forced to endlessly walk in their cells, sometimes in wicker slippers that cut their feet, and typically allowed to sleep only two or three hours a day. Some were forced to wear gloves that caused the flesh on their hands to deteriorate. Many went mad within days. Causing humiliation and making subjects feel they were cowards was one of the most effective techniques. Prisoners would have their hands tied behind their back, forcing them to urinate and defecate on themselves and to eat their food from the floor like a dog. Making a prisoner force himself to stand in one spot for eighteen or twenty hours a day as his warders spit on him and as his legs swelled so much his pants would not fit, broke the will to resist and led to “confessions” by prisoners who pleaded for the most severe punishments for crimes they did not commit.<sup>43</sup>

What is known for certain about Noel and Herta’s five years in their isolated cells was they, like most prisoners, suffered because of malnutrition and lack of medical treatment. Noel lost all his teeth, and it was only late in his confinement that he was provided a set of dentures. All evidence indicates that his other ailments and all of Herta’s went unattended. Erica’s treatment so was severe the Soviet’s confined her in a hospital for several months after her formal release

because international knowledge of her condition would have embarrassed the workers' paradise.

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### **We Can't Find the Fields**

Meanwhile, no one, not even the American State Department or the Central Intelligence Agency, could discover where the Fields were. For years, the agencies only had false leads about them.<sup>45</sup>

The Fields were so valuable to the Soviets their whereabouts were not made public although there were public espionage show trials such as those for the American businessman Robert Vogeler, the reporter William Oatis, and Edgar Sanders the British cousin of the film star George Sanders.<sup>46</sup>

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- <sup>2</sup> On the still illusive Grombach and Pond: Stout, Mark. "The Hazards of Private Spy Operations: The Pond: Running Agents for State, War, and the CIA," at, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol48no3/pdf/v48i3a07p.pdf>, 5; Burke, Colin B., Grombach's Last Hoorah: the Pond and the Soviet Cipher Coup of 1954," <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~burke/>; Lynn, K Kadar, Katalin, "Tibor Eckhardt, Hungarian Émigré Politics and United States Intelligence, 1941-1955," in, Mazurkiewicz, Anna, *East Central Europe in Exile, Volume 2: Transatlantic Identities* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013): 265-292.
- <sup>3</sup> FBI FOIA, grombach,
- <sup>4</sup> Bradley, Mark A., *A Very Principled Boy: The Life of Duncan Lee, Red Spy and Cold Warrior* (NY: Basic Books, 2014).
- <sup>5</sup> Persico, Joseph E., *Edward R. Murrow: An American Original* ( New York McGraw-Hill, c1988); Donaldson, Scott, *Archibald MacLeish, an American Life* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1992); Arndt, Richard, *The First Resort of Kings: American Cultural Diplomacy in the Twentieth Century* (Washington .D.C.: Potomac Books Inc, 2005).
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- <sup>14</sup> Duggan, Stephen, "The Inspiration of UNESCO," *The Journal of Higher Education* 18 3 (1947): 124-127.
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- <sup>17</sup> FBI FOIA, hermann field
- <sup>18</sup> NYT 10-19-1948 ; WP 12-31-48.;
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- <sup>20</sup> Kaplan, "Report" *Op. cit.*, 22.
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- <sup>22</sup> Schmidt, Maria, "Noel Field--The American Communist at the center of Stalin's East European Purges: From the Hungarian Archives," *American Communist History* 3 2 (2004): 215-245.
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- <sup>27</sup> Cold War International History Project, "Slansky Confession; Hodos, *Op. cit.*, 39.
- <sup>28</sup> FBI FOIA, hermann field.
- <sup>29</sup> Cold War International History Project, "Slansky Confession"; Weinstein, "Perjury," *Op. cit.*
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- <sup>31</sup> Sharp, 'Stalin's,' *Op. cit.*
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- <sup>41</sup> FBI FOIA, hermann field; Streatfield, Dominic, *Brainwash: The Secret History of Mind Control* (NY: Thomas Dunn Books, St. Martin's Press, 2007).
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- <sup>43</sup> WP , 1949, *passim*; Streatfield. *Op. cit.*
- <sup>44</sup> FBI FOIA, noel field.
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