

The spies who love us

It's now official. Ottawa is investigating possible spying by Indian government agents on Canada's large Sikh community. So Deputy Prime Minister Don Mazankowski announced this week.

The politicians are doing so with extreme reluctance and only after a great deal of goading, in part thanks to a recent book, *Soft Target*, that this column has already discussed. The book's authors claim that Indian agents conducted extensive covert operations against Sikh militants in Canada 1984-1987, including the unproven allegation that Indian operatives were responsible for the bombing of an Air-India flight that took 329 lives.

That Indian diplomats and undercover agents did spy on Sikh militants in Toronto and Vancouver is almost certain. As this column has noted, the Indian government would have been incredibly negligent not to have done so since many Sikh separatists and terrorists in Punjab were receiving direct support from their fellow Sikhs in Canada.

I happen to feel considerable sympathy for the Sikhs and blame New Delhi for much of the trouble in Punjab. Even so, any competent government must be expected to fight back against a major threat to its internal security. Just, in fact, as Canada should do if FLQ terrorists were to set up shop in France.

But there's another disturbing element in this murky story. Much of the information about Indian spying activities in Canada may have been leaked to the media by the RCMP — and for good reason.

For years the RCMP and, more recently, CSIS have reported to their political masters on foreign intelligence operations in Canada. The usual response by Ottawa has been to do nothing.

India, in particular, has long been a favorite of Ottawa's foreign policy mandarins who have sat on RCMP reports of Indian spying to avoid causing ripples in the warm waters of Indo-Canadian

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relations. India's intelligence operations were certainly no threat to Canadian security, no matter how irritating.

Not so, however, those of the East Bloc. Canada has been well known for the past 40 years as a haven for East Bloc intelligence services and a major staging base, along with Mexico, for operations against the U.S. Besides the Soviet KGB and GRU, agents from Czechoslovakia, Poland and Hungary have been extremely active here. Even more egregious have been the activities of Cuba's DGI, which has one of its largest foreign operations in Ottawa and Montreal.

Add to this heavy-handed and obtrusive spying by communist intelligence services against East European ethnic communities in Canada — groups that posed no direct threat to the communist regimes. Include, as well, Yugoslavia's secret service that has often been allowed to operate here with impunity.

The RCMP and CSIS, who seem too often in competition, have certainly delivered ample documentation of such foreign spying. And, as usual, Ottawa has reacted with inaction.

One senses at times that Ottawa's foreign policy nabobs are more concerned about trade and jolly champagne receptions with their East Bloc colleagues than Canadian national security.

No wonder the RCMP and CSIS are demoralized and confused.

It's also curious that government prosecutes speeders, drinkers, drug users, and cigarette smokers with ruthless efficiency while shrugging off threats to national security. Odd, too, that a ballyhoo is raised about CSIS or RCMP surveillance of extreme left-wing groups, known in the media as "peace activists." Their rights, we are told, are being abused by the security agencies.

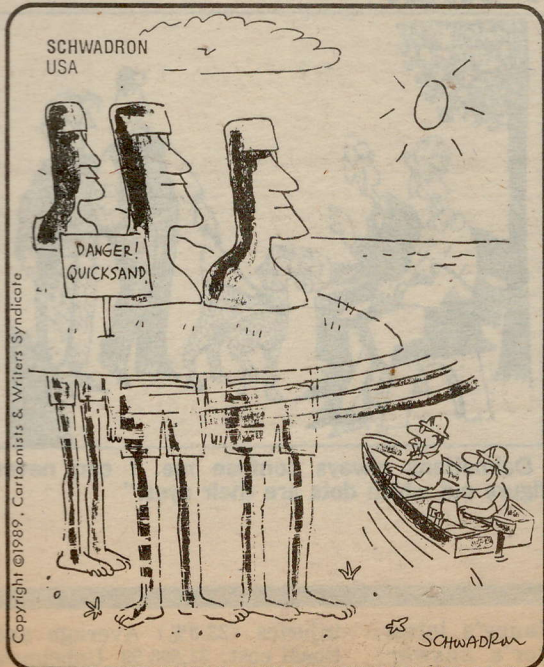
At the same time, almost no one worries about how the rights of ordinary citizens are being violated by the hysterical "war" on drugs or by police spot checks. In other words, it's okay to burst into the home of a pot smoker without any due cause but not okay to burst into the home of people who may be plotting to make bombs or undermine public order.

Priorities seem to have become reversed.

Ironically, while Canada's security services are being handcuffed and then left to take the blame when scandals erupt, spying by East Bloc services is on the increase. Many people just don't want to face the difficult fact that in this age of cozy, love-thy-neighbor glasnost, the KGB is working overtime. A fact that simply does not fit in with the conventional wisdom. More about this on Sunday.

Now that Canada has virtually disarmed, its only line of defence against internal threats and a still wolfish world is the RCMP and CSIS. They need clear orders and honest masters, not more criticism.

Remember, too, that Britain's tough Margaret Thatcher threw out over 100 Soviet spies and is still being given the red carpet in Moscow.



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