



After 30 Years of Silence, the Original NSA Whistleblower Looks Back



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The four-story brownstone at 141 East 37th Street in Manhattan has no remarkable features: a plain building on a quiet tree-lined street in the shadow of the Empire State Building. In the summer of 1920, Herbert O. Yardley, a government codebreaker, moved in with a gang of math geniuses and began deciphering intercepted Japanese diplomatic telegrams. This was the Black Chamber, America's first civilian code-breaking agency. From this was born the

American surveillance state, and eventually the sprawling National Security Agency, which you may have heard about recently.

I was standing on the sidewalk outside the building, on a sweltering summer Friday afternoon, waiting to meet a man named Perry Fellwock, also once known as Winslow Peck. Four decades ago, Fellwock became the NSA's first whistleblower, going to the press to explain the spy agency's immense scope and mission to a public that had barely been allowed to know such an organization existed. His revelations in the radical magazine *Ramparts* were picked up by the front page of the *New York Times*. He went on to be a key player in the turbulent anti-surveillance movement of the 1970s, partnering with Norman Mailer and becoming the target of CIA propaganda. But today he's a semi-retired antiques dealer living in Long Island, as obscure as the Black Chamber once was.

The old Black Chamber site was my suggestion. It was my third attempt to meet Fellwock. He insisted on meeting on neutral ground, and kept canceling. Now I stood on the sidewalk, memorizing the pattern of splotches on the globe lantern above the brownstone's door, trying my best not to look like a spy. An elderly man walked by, and I watched him, half-expecting he'd circle back after scoping out the area. Fellwock had already demonstrated he'd be wary enough to do this.

He did not trust journalists. "If you go back to the Church Committee, you'll find that many, many of your colleagues worked for the intelligence agencies," he told me over the phone. He spoke deliberately, in a warm, authoritative-sounding Midwestern baritone, like a documentary narrator. "I believe that you're honest, but who knows about the people in your office? Who knows about your boss, what kind of deals he's doing?"



I first heard Perry Fellwock's name a few weeks after Edward Snowden, a 29-year-old former intelligence contractor, **strode into history** lugging laptops full of NSA secrets. After the *Guardian* began publishing stories based on Snowden's documents, the anti-secrecy website Cryptome re-posted the original 1972 *Ramparts* article, "**Electronic Espionage: A Memoir,**" in which Fellwock had exposed the NSA.

Edward Snowden Convinced NSA Coworkers to Give Him Their Passwords

According to Reuters, Edward Snowden persuaded his colleagues at the NSA regional operations in...

Fellwock, under his Winslow Peck pseudonym, was introduced as

a senior NSA analyst in the Istanbul listening post for over two years. He was a participant in the deadly international fencing match that goes on daily with the Soviet Union, plotting their air and ground forces and penetrating their defenses.

At the time, only the broadest outlines of the NSA's activities had ever been reported in the press. Its headquarters were unmarked; its description in official government documents restricted to an absurdly vague, "Performs highly specialized technical and coordinating functions relating to the national security." The post-Snowden spectacle of the NSA chief testifying before Congress, and then being caught in falsehoods by further leaks, was unimaginable. No director would have spoken publicly about the agency's mission at all, let alone anything it might or might not have done.

"They never thought anybody would ever be able to write about them," said the journalist James Bamford, who has written three books on the NSA, including the first definitive account of the Agency, 1982's *Puzzle Palace*. "At the time it was an agency that sort of existed apart from the rest of the government, almost."

And there, in 1972, was a rogue analyst, some kid in his 20s, describing the NSA's business down to the colors of the badges worn at its headquarters. Winslow Peck claimed that the NSA had broken all of the Soviets' codes, that the government's official account of the Vietnam War was a lie, and that the agency was guilty of salacious corruption:

Quite a few people in NSA are into illegal activities of one kind or another. It's taken to be one of the fringe benefits of the job. You know, enhancing your pocketbook. Smuggling. People inside NSA got involved with the slave trade.

Here was the same self-assurance, bordering on arrogance, that was coming from Snowden—the urgency of an oath broken in the name of some more essential principle. What had happened to Fellwock to make him turn to *Ramparts*, and what happened after? Amid the flashbulb urgency of the Snowden disclosures, one revelation after the next, Fellwock seemed to offer a chance to roll the clock forward 40 years, to see what Snowden's story might look like in retrospect.

I emailed the cypherpunk architect John Young, the **enigmatic founder** of Cryptome, to see if he might know how to reach Fellwock. The site functions as an online water cooler for a sometimes unsettlingly knowledgeable community of intelligence buffs, who trade emails full of dark but unverifiable rumors.

A Discussion With Cryptome

When the Guardian and Washington Post published their blockbuster NSA reports based on Ed...

Young offered a few suggested leads and one characteristically cracked insight: "Fellwock is said to be reclusive, but as a fellow recluse, we harbor lust for vengeance, justification, triumph, will spill guts for final shot. So social engineer the fuck out of the Original Famous NSA Hero." In the end, it didn't take any social engineering. He lives in Oceanside, Long Island. The rogue agent's phone number turned up through Google.



Reaching Fellwock, though, was not the same as getting through to him. The first time I called him, the conversation only lasted four minutes. He offered a cryptic offhand comment about the *Ramparts* story: "Well, it wasn't really an interview with me." Mostly, he made it clear he was not eager for a return to the spotlight. "Right now, I don't have anything to add," he said.

A few days later, I tried again. This time he began unspooling like magnetic tape: holding forth on the NSA, recommending scores of articles and books. I'd need the material to comprehend the arcane back stories and dark conspiracies he was outlining, involving U.S. and British intelligence agencies. It all sounded outlandish, but given the source, maybe true? Overwhelmed, I suggested meeting in person, at a Manhattan coffee shop, and Fellwock reluctantly agreed.

The day before our scheduled rendezvous, however, I got a cryptic email from a throwaway Gmail account that Fellwock had set up to communicate with me: "On advise [*sic*] of counsel, I can not meet with you. Please do not attempt to contact me. I have no interest in the matters you mentioned."

A week later, I called anyway. “What happened?” I said.

“My attorneys have advised me not to speak more about this,” Fellwock said. “I spoke to them and we went over some things. The only thing I can say is that you really should look at what’s happening to the other whistleblowers.”

I told him I was aware the Obama Administration has zealously cracked down on whistleblowers and leakers. “But you haven’t done anything for years,” I said. “What could they do to you now?”

“They can’t do anything to me for what I did back then, but I don’t want them to do anything to me for what I’ve done now. I’ve already spoken too much.” He paused, lowering his voice dramatically: “This is not a good time. This is not a good time for our country.”

But even as we haggled, Fellwock kept slipping into long digressions on the NSA and his own whistleblowing past. Finally, I pointed out how much he was already telling me. “Why don't you just meet me?” I said.

“OK,” he said. “I could meet with you somewhere, preferably outside. I want to be able to see the people that are around.”

We set a new date: Noon on a Friday, at a bench outside the train station in Oceanside. Just as I was about to hang up he stopped me.

“Wait, I don’t think meeting at the train station is a good idea because that seems a little spookish,” he said. “I’m not a spook, so I don’t want to do anything spookish. Maybe you could meet me while I’m grocery shopping. What’s a normal thing we can do?”

I tried to think of things a 67-year-old antiques dealer and a 28-year-old journalist might normally do together. Grocery shopping was not high on the list. Fellwock came up with another plan: We would go to a Chinese restaurant

near the train station and grab lunch.

"I hope I don't regret this," he said. He wouldn't get a chance to. Once again, he called off the meeting abruptly. Apologetically, he told me he would be in Manhattan later on other business. Could we meet there?

So I stood outside the brownstone. The time for our appointment came and passed. Five minutes. Ten minutes. And then there was a white-haired man in a blue striped shirt and black pants, hair combed back in a pouf, walking right up to the building. Sweat beaded on his forehead from walking in the heat. He shook my hand and gazed up at the house.

"So this is where Yardley started the whole thing," he said.



In 1972, a 25-year-old Perry Fellwock sat in a Berkeley IHOP with the co-editors of *Ramparts*, Peter Collier and David Horowitz. He had no hesitations about talking then. He had mailed the leftist magazine an article he'd written under the name Winslow Peck, explaining that he was an Air Force veteran who had been attached to the NSA and now wanted to expose the agency.

The people at *Ramparts* at first didn't know what to make of the typewritten story they'd got in the mail. "It was full of unfamiliar terms like 'SIGINT' and 'ELINT,' which didn't mean a hell of a lot to us," said Peter Collier. But one staffer who happened to be ex-military intelligence read it and panicked. It was bristling with codes that only an authentic insider would have known. "If we printed them, he said, we would go to jail," Horowitz later recalled in his memoir *Radical Son*.

So Collier and Horowitz had invited Fellwock to Berkeley. Collier recalls him as a "geeky sort of guy" with an unusually intense passion, even for the radical company *Ramparts* kept—Black Panthers, Latin American revolutionaries. “He was a very odd, odd person,” Collier said. “Just physically and stylistically odd.”

By then, Fellwock had given over his life to the anti-war movement, moving to San Diego to help plan demonstrations against the Republican National Convention scheduled to be held there. Up in Berkeley, he told the *Ramparts* editors about what he'd done before.

He would provide them with the first comprehensive and unvarnished report from inside a vast worldwide spying machine. Till then, the NSA had played a key role in nearly every major geopolitical and military event of the Cold War, with almost no public scrutiny. The only other comparable revelations had occurred more than a decade earlier when two NSA defectors to Russia sketched the Agency's activities during a 30-minute press conference in Moscow in 1960.

The dearth of unsanitized information about the NSA explains why, though the *Ramparts* story was based only on the word of one unknown analyst, the *New York Times* would report it on its front page. The *Times* coverage focused mainly on Fellwock's claim that the U.S. could "break every Soviet code with remarkable success":

The United States is reported to have refined its electronics intelligence techniques to the point where it can break Soviet codes, listen to and understand soviet communications and coding systems and keep track of virtually every sub jet plane or missile-carrying submarine around the world.

Ramparts' and Fellwock's goal in revealing the U.S.'s capability was to expose

the justification for the military excesses of the Cold War as a farce, since the U.S. was so clearly dominant. The claim was almost certainly exaggerated. "We never cracked that many codes from Russia," Bamford said. But many of Fellwock's particulars were accurate, revealing, as the *Times* wrote at the time, "hitherto suspected but obscure details of electronic eavesdropping around the globe." More significant than any individual fact was the dramatic puncturing of the nearly absolute secrecy surrounding the NSA.



"I thought it was a big deal at the time because nobody had ever done that and it took a lot of courage to do stuff like that back then," said Bamford.

Fellwock knew breaking his oath of secrecy would put him on a collision course with the government. That spring, Rennie Davis—his friend and an anti-war activist—had declared, "If the government won't stop the war, the people will stop the government."

"I was willing to do anything possible to stop the war. I was crazy."

Fellwock took the message to heart. He had followed the fallout from the leak of the Pentagon Papers a year earlier with interest and hoped his disclosures might spark similar public outrage. If he was prosecuted for the article, all the better: It would just bring more attention to the government's misdeeds

"What I wanted to do was stop the war, and I was willing to do anything possible to stop the war," Fellwock told me. "I was crazy."



In person, Fellwock was nothing like the haunted paranoiac I'd argued with on the phone. He had a wide, friendly face. He immediately apologized for his previous skittishness. "After my family and my attorneys heard what I told you about, they freaked," he said with a laugh.

We went to a nearby diner. Fellwock ordered chicken fried steak, folded his hands across his chest, and began to tell me how he'd gone from a normal childhood in Joplin, Missouri to the front page of the *New York Times*. There was no one decisive moment, he said, only a long process of disillusionment, mirroring many other young Americans' disillusionments in the '60s.

When the Vietnam War began in earnest, Fellwock was in college studying archaeology. "I had no career goals," he said. "My main interest was in antiquities," he said. Convinced that military service was inevitable, he signed

up for the Air Force in 1966, figuring it was his best chance of avoiding combat.

During his training, Fellwock was approached by three men who, he later learned, worked for the National Security Agency. He took a battery of tests and was selected to join the NSA as an analyst. “Their main concern was our sex life,” he told *Ramparts* in 1972. “They wanted to know if we were homosexual.”

After his training, Fellwock plunged into the front lines of the Cold War. He volunteered for an assignment at the NSA’s listening post in Turkey, in a small coastal village called Karamursel, just southeast of Istanbul. It would be a chance to see the world, he thought, and particularly the relics of the Ottoman Empire.

He was tasked with analyzing Soviet air force activities. Though the American public at home was terrified by the Soviet threat, Fellwock said his access to raw intelligence made him feel safer—even if he had once anxiously tracked a flight of nuclear-armed Russian bombers heading straight toward Istanbul, pulling a U-turn just short of the line that would have set off a nuclear war.

“I thought we were keeping World War III from happening, I really thought that was what our job was,” Fellwock said. “Because we knew everything that was going on, and as long as we knew everything that was going on, there was a possibility of preventing everything.”

Fellwock’s faith in his mission was shaken within a year. In 1967, the Six-Day War between Israel and a number of neighboring Arab countries erupted. Israeli forces attacked an NSA spy ship, the U.S.S. *Liberty*, while it was on an eavesdropping mission off the coast of Egypt. Thirty-five crew members were killed, and 171 wounded.

Israel claimed that in the fog of war it had misidentified the ship as Egyptian. But James Bamford, in his book *Body of Secrets*, has made a **strong case** that

the IDF knowingly attacked the spy ship in order to cover up their massacring of hundreds of Egyptian POWs in a nearby town. Whatever the case, the incident sparked outrage within the NSA, especially after Lyndon Johnson's administration covered it up so as not to embarrass the U.S.'s strongest ally in the Middle East.

For Fellwock, the intrigue surrounding the *Liberty* incident opened up new, dark possibilities. "It made begin to wonder what the heck is going on in the world," he said. "This is not the way things are supposed to be."

Having glimpsed the chaos of a war the U.S. wasn't even a party to, Fellwock began to wonder about the ongoing American war in Vietnam. In 1968, his curiosity overcame his aversion to combat and he volunteered for Vietnam. "I had to find out why things were going this way," he said.

If there had ever been a good time to go to Vietnam, early 1968 was not it. A few weeks after Fellwock's arrival, the Viet Cong launched the Tet Offensive and crushed any hope of a quick American victory. While Fellwock's NSA colleagues in Turkey had been intelligent and friendly, he now found himself surrounded by battle-hardened men just trying to stay alive amid constant bombardment and firefights. He was scared of Viet Cong rocket attacks but even more terrified by U.S. Marines, many of whom despised the Air Force and wouldn't hesitate to beat the shit out of an airman like him when they were drunk.

"Everyone was suspicious of everyone," Fellwock said. "Everyone hated everyone."

His main assignment was to fly out of Pleiku Airbase in central Vietnam aboard an Air Force C-47 prop plane bristling with antennae. These were Airborne Radio Direction Finding missions, a cutting-edge military technology that used computers to locate Viet Cong radio transmitters in real-time. As an analyst, Fellwock sat at a console onboard, using the intercepted signals to fix Vietcong

troop coordinates.

One of Fellwock's main targets in Vietnam was a particularly threatening North Vietnamese Army brigade. Using the NSA radio data, he helped prepare a map of the brigade's travel patterns. That map guided an enormous B-52 bombing raid: One sortie per hour for 36 hours, lacing the area with 30 tons of explosives each time, according to Fellwock.

A few weeks later, he flew to the area and inspected first-hand the devastation he'd helped inflict. "I'd never seen so many bodies," he said. "The really gruesome thing about them was that they weren't killed by shrapnel. They were killed from concussions. They bled from every pore, so the bodies were black from the dried blood, and of course they smelled awful. It was a horrible sight and I knew I'd participated in it. And the feelings of guilt started at that point."

The guilt and stress made Fellwock realize he had to get out of Vietnam. He managed to wrangle an early end to his Vietnam tour and in mid-1969, 13 months after he'd arrived, he returned to the States, transferred to the Air Force reserves, and went back to college, hoping to put the war behind him.

He made it one semester. Then, on May 4th, 1970, National Guardsmen opened fire on unarmed student antiwar protestors at Kent State, killing four and wounding nine. Kent State made it impossible for Fellwock to fade back into a normal life.

"That was one of the final straws because it was very clear that U.S. troops should not be killing students," he said. He had left one theater of war and found another. Once again, he would throw himself into the front lines.



Beatles songs played on the jukebox in the diner, and John Kerry, a onetime leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War, was on the television, threatening Syria with missiles. "He was always trying to weaken the movement," Fellwock said, recalling Kerry's antiwar days, "and have everything focused on him. He was a real son of a bitch in my opinion, and I think you can talk to any Vietnam vet who would say that. "

Today Fellwock doesn't follow politics or the news. The last time he voted for president was in 1972, for George McGovern.

"Basically I just live a quiet ordinary life now," he said. "I'm retired, and my hobby and my business to supplement my income is to buy and sell antiques. That's all I do."

When I first called him, he had been only vaguely aware of Snowden's disclosures. But as he read more, he said, he'd learned how **little** had changed since 1976.

The Guardian Claims British Government Destroyed Their Hard Drives

Writing in response to yesterday's detainment of David Miranda, Alan Rusbridger, the editor of ...

"I think Snowden is a patriot," he said. "I admire Snowden and some of these other whistleblowers because they've come out in a time when there's not a lot of political support."

However, as someone who stayed in the United States after his own whistleblowing, he believes Snowden made a miscalculation by fleeing the country. "I think he should have stayed here and faced the consequences," he said. "I understand his fear, but I really think it was a mistake on his part."

Now that Fellwock was coming forward again, even hesitantly, he wanted to do

it right. He squinted at a small piece of paper on which he'd written the key points about the NSA he had wanted to get across with his *Ramparts* article.

"Most people in those days thought that the NSA and CIA worked for the U.S. government. But they don't. They're an entity unto itself."

"Most people in those days thought that the NSA and CIA worked for the U.S. government," he said. "But they don't. They're an entity unto itself, a global entity that is comprised of the Five Eyes." The Five Eyes is the informal name for the intelligence-sharing agreement between the United States, Great Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. "This community operates outside of the Constitution," Fellwock said, "and from everything I've seen, it still does."

Fellwock was taking care to spell out these points now because he doesn't believe they came across in his original *Ramparts* article. He is ambivalent about the published product of his whistleblowing: He says he never meant for his NSA expose to be a first-person "memoir." He had intended to publish a straightforward critique of the NSA under his own byline, laying out his points like an op-ed.

Fellwock said he had believed Collier and Horowitz were gathering facts for such an article when they put him up at a San Francisco hotel in the weeks after their IHOP meeting and grilled him for hours in taped interviews. Instead, those interviews appeared in *Ramparts* verbatim. This is what he meant when he said it wasn't "really an interview."

"They published this rambling interview that said some things that were true and some other things that weren't true," he said. "They just turned it into a sensational piece of gossip as far as I was concerned."

Casual asides he thought were just between him and the *Ramparts* editors were laid indelibly in print. The most riveting passage of the Winslow Peck *Ramparts* interview was the story of how a Russian cosmonaut's final, doomed mission was picked up by the NSA's Turkey listening post. The spacecraft malfunctioned, and Peck explained that analysts had eavesdropped as the cosmonaut plummeted to Earth and was incinerated. They recorded his pitiful cries to his handlers: "I don't want to die, you've got to do something."

This anecdote has become established in space exploration lore. Most recently it was repeated by authors of the book *Starman*, a biography of Yuri Gagerin. They identified the unlucky cosmonaut as Vladimir Komarov, **writing** that "the radio outposts in Turkey picked up his cries of rage as he plunged to his death, cursing the people who had put him inside a botched spaceship." This was a myth. Komarov did burn up upon reentry and the NSA did intercept his communications, but later analyses have **debunked** the most dramatic details of Fellwock's account, including the "cries of rage."

What really happened to cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov, who died crashing to Earth in 1967?

One of the most horrific and mysterious deaths in space is that of USSR cosmonaut Vladimir Komarov, ...

That the anecdote was inaccurate isn't surprising considering its provenance: Fellwock told me the story he told *Ramparts* of the dying cosmonaut was a bit of workplace gossip that circulated during his time as a young analyst in Turkey. "It was abuzz all over the station that this had happened, and it was basically me picking up the buzz."

In 1972, when Fellwock saw the proofs of his *Ramparts* article, with a transcript of his words staring back at him, he was shocked but he buried his concerns. Today, he's not so sanguine. His opinion has been colored by the fact that not long after the *Ramparts* article, both Peter Collier and David Horowitz turned away from the left to become prominent conservatives. Collier founded the

conservative publisher Encounter Books; Horowitz wrote a memoir, *Radical Son*, renouncing his '60s allegiances, and now travels the country as an apocalyptic right-wing pundit, warning people that colleges are being taken over by “Islamofascists.”

Fellwock told me he believes Collier and Horowitz were never truly part of the left, and that they misused his words purposefully to cause maximum chaos in a demented quest to hurt America.

“There was an element within our movement that was fundamentally anti-American and wanted to create chaos in America and really disrupt and destroy American society,” he said.

When I spoke to Collier, he disputed Fellwock’s claim that he and Horowitz had misled him about the interview. He said that Fellwock had spoken into a tape recorder for hours, knowing he was being interviewed for an article: “I can’t imagine why he would think” his words would not be in the article, Collier said.

At the least, there must have been a misunderstanding between source and journalists. Fellwock approached *Ramparts*’ editors as colleagues who would help him refine his own story; they saw him as a source, from which to extract a juicy scoop.

Today, Collier echoes Fellwock’s disdain for the article, with his own motivations. His doubts about the article, he said, beginning before it was even published, helped spur his first steps away from the left. About a month before the NSA story came out, Collier said, his father, a conservative who had argued heatedly with him about his radical politics, died of cancer.

“Towards the end, he was dying of cancer and here I was preparing to do this thing,” Collier said. “And he loved his country. After I did it, when I was still grieving for him, the thought came into my mind: I said, Oh, God, I betrayed my

father's country. This was really my first move out of the left, to understand what my intentions were: To hurt this country, to make it vulnerable, to make it less strong.”

Soon after the Snowden story broke this past summer, Wikileaks tweeted out a link to a copy of the 1972 *Ramparts* interview. “The first big NSA whistleblower, Perry Fellwock, was so far ahead of his time, no-one believed him,” they wrote. Forty years later, neither Fellwock nor Collier wholly believe in the landmark interview themselves.



On July 18, 1972, two days after the front page *New York Times* story, Fellwock appeared at a press conference in *Ramparts*' cramped Berkeley office. Despite his reservations, Fellwock decided to make the most out of the attention the article had brought. He could set the facts straight later.

The office was packed with reporters. Sporting big wire-framed glasses, his long hair swept out of his face, Fellwock read a prepared statement while flanked by Collier and Horowitz. A poster of Che Guevara hung on the wall.

“We must take steps to insure there are no more Vietnams,” Fellwock told the assembled crowd. “I believe I have taken such a step. I have done it for neither money nor glory, but to bring to the American people knowledge which they have a ‘need to know.’”

There would be no official prosecution for his breach of secrecy. Before publishing, *Ramparts* had consulted with the lawyer for Daniel Ellsberg, the leaker of the Pentagon Papers. Ellsberg's lawyer told them that the government

wouldn't risk exposing more secrets by publicly going after them for the article. He was right.

But *Ramparts* staff noticed that there was one unknown reporter at the press conference who seemed a bit too eager to learn if Fellwock was in possession of any classified documents. This was the first of many encounters Fellwock would have with people he suspected to be CIA operatives.

Fellwock didn't stop to take a breath after the media frenzy. The GOP convention had been relocated from San Diego to Miami, after a site-selection scandal, and he followed it there. Between tear gas-drenched protests with the Vietnam Veterans Against the War that August, Fellwock discussed the future of the movement with Rennie Davis.

Davis had been impressed with the *Ramparts* article and suggested that Fellwock dedicate himself to exposing spying-related abuses. The Pentagon Papers had shown the dangers of excessive secrecy, as had the 1971 revelation of FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover's COINTELPRO program targeting United States activists and radicals. It was clear, especially to liberals, that covert operations had spiraled horribly out of control, both home and abroad.

So, in the fall of 1972, Fellwock and Tim Butz, a former Air Force intelligence officer and fellow antiwar activist, founded a new group, under the rather clunky name of the Committee for Action/Research on the Intelligence Community, or CARIC. Their goal was strikingly similar to what Wikileaks would propose decades later: to watch the watchers by acting as a clearinghouse for information about surveillance and covert operations.

Butz and Fellwock reached out to whistleblowers and Vietnam vets, focusing on other intelligence officers who had grown disillusioned and wanted to use the skills they learned in the service against their former employers. CARIC's main endeavor was a quarterly magazine, *Counter-Spy*, which was the vehicle for its

research and polemics.

CARIC also anticipated Wikileaks' intensive approach to uncovering information, treating journalism as a matter of data analysis. Where Julian Assange has advanced the idea of “scientific journalism,” based on dumping primary sources and documents to back up claims, CARIC developed what it referred to as the “New Intelligence,” which aimed to be a beneficent mirror held up to the dark arts of the CIA and the FBI.

“The New Intelligence,” explained an issue of *Counter-Spy*, “is the product resulting from the scientific collection, evaluation, analysis, integration and interpretation of all information concerning experiments in technofascism and eventually the conditions which produce it.”

In practice, this meant exhaustively documenting and exposing covert action wherever it occurred. One of CARIC's earliest coups was tipping off the *Washington Post* that Nixon's Committee for the Reelection of the President had hired George Washington University students to spy on anti-war protests. Another early focus was the CIA's **Operation Phoenix**, a secret assassination program in Vietnam.

“Only a full and undisguised look into this hidden world can displace unwarranted fears, and guide the public effort to end this illegal and unjustified espionage,” read an early CARIC handout. “The secrecy with which the government surrounds itself must end.”



As Fellwock and Butz organized their efforts in Washington, D.C., a similar idea

was taking shape in New York, thanks to Norman Mailer. In February of 1973, the brawling novelist-journalist-activist held a lavish party at the Four Seasons, partly to celebrate his 50th birthday and partly to announce and raise funds for a new venture, something he called the Fifth Estate.

Mailer got blind drunk but managed to spit out his idea of the Fifth Estate as a “people’s CIA and a people’s FBI to investigate the CIA and the FBI.”

“If we have a democratic secret police to keep tabs on Washington’s secret police, we will see how far paranoia is justified,” he said.



The press slammed Mailer’s slurred, self-aggrandizing performance, but the weeks that followed brought new Watergate revelations, showing the extent to which Richard Nixon, with his “enemies list,” had used the machinery of the state to screw with his political opponents.

In July, *Village Voice* writer Nat Hentoff made the connection between CARIC

and the Fifth Estate in a column. By then, Fellwock and Butz had been joined by a third partner, Barton Osborne, another disillusioned ex-military intelligence officer. Hentoff urged Mailer to help them out: “Norman, these three ex-intelligence agents are legitimate. I mean really legitimate.”

Mailer invited Butz and Fellwock up his sprawling Brooklyn Heights home. By that time, Fellwock was used to hanging around high-profile activists and political figures but he was left deeply impressed with Mailer’s intelligence and vision. “Norman could see on levels that I think most normal people can’t see,” Fellwock said.

Fellwock’s own view of the world at the time was simplistic: Capitalism was the ultimate evil, and the sole explanation for why the U.S. kept doing evil things. But Mailer divined from the nation’s misdeeds a psychological torment.

"What [Norman] Mailer told me is that the CIA is basically a white Christian Protestant organization. And white Christian Protestants have to find a devil in order to justify what they do."

“What Mailer told me is that the CIA is basically a white Christian Protestant organization,” Fellwock said. “And white Christian Protestants have to find a devil in order to justify what they do. Their Christian values say they should help the poor, like the Communists were. But they were not helping the poor. They were helping the very rich. And this created a conflict inside of the white Christian Protestant mind that could only be resolved by them seeking out a devil and making that devil into an exaggerated thing. Thus, they exaggerated the threat of communism just like they’re exaggerating the threat of Islam today.”

The meeting led, in 1974, to CARIC's joining with Mailer's Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate. OC-5, as it was abbreviated, was the fundraising arm, while Butz and Fellwock focused on running *Counter-Spy*. Mailer didn't just bring a better name to Fellwock and Butz's efforts. His celebrity was invaluable for fundraising and publicity.

A Senate hearing on the Organizing Committee for a Fifth Estate offered an amusing portrait of the Mailer-CARIC alliance in describing a fundraiser held in D.C. :

Norman Mailer made a rambling 30-minute speech; the OC-5 staffers, Timothy Charles Butz, Perry Fellwock, also known as Winslow Peck, K. Barton Osborn and Douglas Porter spoke of their counterintelligence activities and the somewhat besotted liberals in attendance poured two bottles of Portuguese wine into a planter in support of African liberation.



But *Counter-Spy* was mostly deadly serious. Its tiny offices just off Dupont Circle hummed with staffers and journalists who came by to sift through file cabinets filled with documents about covert operations. Sometimes *Counter-Spy* staff would plant a story in a visitor's ear. The Fifth Estate staff launched campus tours and local branches and sent representatives to radio shows to debate former members of the intelligence community; one goal was to seed libraries of intelligence files at universities throughout the country, to make them more resilient to government pressure, a peer-to-peer file-sharing network before the internet.

Fellwock, whom everyone knew as Winslow Peck, was usually too busy researching the CIA's infiltration of the South American labor movement or some other arcane conspiracy to be very social. He had a gift for divining hidden meaning from mountains of data.

"There was a mad scientist quality to him," said Harvey Kahn, a *Counter-Spy* staffer from 1974 to 1976 who is today a movie producer in Vancouver, Canada. Kahn remembers that staffers would seek out Fellwock's counsel, oracle-like, about their own research. "You felt if Winslow thinks that's what's going on, that's what's going on. He had such an ability to absorb material and recall."

Fellwock's absorption could cross the line into unhealthy obsession. He worked so feverishly that he wore his body down, Kahn said: "He seemed to be working all the time, he always seemed to be getting a cold. He didn't really eat right. You just thought, this is not a person who is going to live a long and happy life."

"None of us who were in the movement back then enjoyed what was going on," Fellwock said. "This wasn't a good time for anybody. We were not thrill-seekers. There was no joy. There was, will we survive to the next day? Can we do something to stop these bastards?"

But remembering the days from a distance at the diner, Fellwock paused and smiled. "This is fun," he said. Still, the darkness hadn't lifted completely. Whenever I brought the conversation to his personal life, I was met with uncomfortable silence. Was he married? "I don't want to get into that," Did he have kids? "I'd rather not talk about that." He insisted I not mention the name of the antiques business he's a partner in, so that his colleagues wouldn't be "dragged into this."

"It's just my life is in a different world now and I don't want my life now disrupted," Fellwock said. "I only have a few years left. I want to enjoy those years. I want my family to be safe and enjoy life"

It turns out that constant brooding over the machinations of the surveillance state is not conducive to a sound state of mind. *Counter-Spy* staff worked in a haze of mistrust. “You’d be sitting with people and you knew that somebody was wondering about somebody else at that table,” said Harvey Kahn, “were they being controlled by somebody else? Or unconsciously being manipulated?”

It was not a fantasy: The COINTELPRO papers had revealed security agencies kept close tabs on radical publications. In the late '60s, the CIA dedicated a 12-man team to undermining *Ramparts*, according to Angus Mackenzie’s book *Secrets: The CIA’s War at Home*.

“It was intense,” said Fellwock. “Clearly it really upset the security agencies, what we were doing. They were all over us. I just generally accepted that the next person in the next booth would be some security person following me.”

“It seems like that is still kind of implanted in your thinking,” I said.

“Yeah, that’s why I got paranoid when you called me, you really evoked a lot of old memories and feelings that I haven’t had in 30 years.” He sighed. “But if I could live with it back then, I guess I could live with it now.”



In late 1975, *Counter-Spy* pushed the government farther than it ever had before, and the government pushed back. Frustrated by the lack of reform in the surveillance state, even after Nixon's resignation in 1974, *Counter-Spy* decided in its Winter 1975 issue to take another step: the magazine would name names, blowing agents' cover, with the explicit purpose of damaging the spy agency’s ability to work abroad.

The idea, Fellwock said, was inspired by Philip Agee, a former CIA agent who had earlier than year published his memoir, *Inside the Company*, a scathing critique of the agency. In the book, Agee had outed the identities of 250 CIA officers.

“Agee had the idea of escalating by us naming names of CIA people all around the world,” Fellwock said, “which is really easy to do, it turned out.”

A November 1974 *Washington Monthly* article by John Marks called “How to Spot a Spook” showed how it was done. All you needed to do was scour lists of foreign embassy staff, then crosscheck those names with the State Department’s Biographic Register for telltale signs of spook-dom, such as odd gaps in career histories or inexplicable job titles.

Counter-Spy staff used the technique to create a list of 225 CIA station chiefs around world under diplomatic cover. The list was published accompanied by an Agee editorial declaring, “The most effective and important systematic efforts to combat CIA that can be undertaken right now are, I think, the identification, exposure, and neutralization of its people working abroad.”

On December 23, 1975, a few days after the issue was published, the phone rang in the *Counter-Spy* office. Harvey Kahn, working alone during D.C.’s Christmastime lull, answered. It was a *New York Times* reporter. Had *Counter-Spy*’s list of station chiefs, the *Times* reporter asked, included the name Richard Welch?

Welch was on the list, Kahn found—listed as the CIA station chief in Lima, Peru. It turned out to be the wrong station, but that inaccuracy wouldn’t change how events were about to unfold. Welch’s real post was Athens, and, the *Times* reporter said, he had just been murdered there.

A Greek Marxist organization called Revolutionary Organization 17 November

claimed credit for the assassination, but the covert community charged *Counter-Spy* with being an accessory. Former and current intelligence officers rushed to pin the blame for the killing on the tiny magazine. President Gerald Ford himself said through a spokesperson that *Counter-Spy* “had been at least partially responsible for his death.”

“It was the most incredible thing,” said Harvey Kahn. “Imagine your little office full of reporters literally from everywhere, cameras, big celebrity reporters.”

Under the pressure, *Counter-Spy* reaffirmed its mission. The Fifth Estate issued a statement declaring that “if anyone is to blame for Mr. Welch's death, it is the CIA that sent him to Greece to spy and intervene in the affairs of the Greek people.”

But a remarkable CIA smear campaign was already underway. After the Welch story broke, a CIA press director had started calling reporters and insisting *Counter-Spy* was to blame.

There was no evidence that Welch’s killers had learned Welch’s identity from the magazine or even read it. They wouldn't have needed to. The CIA neglected to mention that an Athens newspaper had already blown Welch’s cover weeks before *Counter-Spy* published his name. Moreover Welch, upon transferring to Athens, had moved into the previous chief’s house, despite warnings from his superiors that the location was widely known to house the CIA station chief.

But the CIA was under intense pressure amid a stream of embarrassing revelations from the Church Committee, convened in 1975 to investigate CIA lawbreaking. *Counter-Spy* and OC-5 occupied the radical edge of “a broader anxiety about how intelligence fit into the United States government,” said Steven Aftergood, an expert on government secrecy with the Federation of American Scientists.

The CIA saw the Welch murder as a way to swing the pendulum of popular opinion back to its side. Morton Halperin, then a researcher with the Center for National Security Studies, wrote three years after the assassination:

The Welch Assassination case is the only one that I am aware of where there is evidence of manipulation of the American press for the purpose of influencing events in the United States. CIA successfully exploited the murder of one of its station chiefs to set back efforts to bring the CIA under constitutional control.

The pressure alienated *Counter-Spy* from some of their closest allies on the left, including Mailer, who was horrified by his name being linked to the killing, according to his biographer Mary Dearborn.

"We had the president of the United States lying about us."

"We had the president of the United States lying about us," Fellwock said. *Counter-Spy* received death threats from right-wing Cuban immigrants and former intelligence officers. Tim Butz started carrying a gun.

"The days after the Welch thing blew up in the press were intense," Doug Porter, a longtime *Counter-Spy* staffer, wrote in an email. "We operated under the assumption that every phone conversation was being bugged and there were several instances where we saw unmarked cars observing our activities—even stuff like shopping for groceries was cause for paranoia."

Even before the Welch affair, *Counter-Spy's* funding had been drying up as the left broke up into squabbling factions in the post-Nixon years. The Welch

murder “gave the liberals all the excuses they needed to peel away from the movement,” Fellwock said. “That was the final nail in the coffin for us.”

A few months after Welch was buried in Arlington Cemetery in a state funeral, *Counter-Spy* dissolved.



The *Washington Post* marked the demise of *Counter-Spy* with a brief article on July 8, 1976, which began “Political and personal bickering has split the staff of *Counter-Spy*, a magazine the Central Intelligence Agency partially blamed for the murder of an Athens agency official last December.” The *Post* hinted at drama behind the scenes, writing that the split came amidst accusations that members were “police agents, anticommunists, sexists and liberals.”

One of the *Counter-Spy* associates accused of being a police plant was Doug Porter. In the early '70s, Porter was the editor of a San Diego underground paper when he met Butz and Fellwock on a trip to the East Coast to work on a story about a Southern California right-wing paramilitary group. He joined *Counter-Spy* in 1973 and moved in with Fellwock and other Fifth Estate staffers in a house in Maryland.

Today, Porter runs the San Diego Free Press, a local progressive news website. He lost his vocal cords to cancer, so he couldn't talk on the phone. But the bitterness over how things ended at *Counter-Spy* bled out of his words in an email.

“I've moved on, had a whole lot of interesting experiences and yet the one thing I cannot bring myself to do is to forgive Peck/Fellwock,” he wrote.

Things fell apart during an intense meeting in the aftermath of the Welch affair, Porter wrote. The group had gathered for a clandestine meeting at a nearby office building for what Porter thought would be a discussion of policy. But it abruptly turned into an inquisition of Porter, with Fellwock leading the charge.

“It was like a scene out of a bad novel,” Porter wrote. “I was accused of being either a Trotskyist or a police agent; some kind of spy sent in to disrupt and ruin his life's work. Nothing I said could dissuade him.”

“I left that room in tears, and I'm not a weepy kinda guy. It didn't take long for word to get out about the accusations; most of the people I knew in DC stopped speaking to me. The woman I was seeing said '*no mas*'. I've spent thousands upon thousands for therapy since that time. Getting shunned is no small thing. And I'm in a pretty good place these days. But I'll never get over Winslow. Fucker.”

Fellwock looked concerned when I told him about Porter's anger. “I'm sorry to hear that,” he said. Fellwock said that Porter had been kicked out over concerns from a group of *Counter-Spy* associates in Chicago, who'd become convinced that he was some sort of agent provocateur because of controversial statements he made in the press. The pressure from the Welch assassination was also a factor, he said.

“I don't even remember, but I think it had something to do with resorting to violence,” Fellwock said. “Perhaps this was just a stupid statement, but there were a lot of conflicts going on. Eventually I sided with the Chicago group. But I don't know, OK?” (Porter denies he'd ever advocated violence.)

Fellwock's gaze dropped to his plate. When he looked up his expression was plaintive.

“All I have to say about all my colleagues back then,” he said, “no matter what

disputes I had with them personal or ideological, is that to my dying day I'll think they were the bravest people I've ever met." Now Fellwock was crying. He put his hands to his face. "I'm sorry," he said, and got up to go to the bathroom.



It's nearly impossible to imagine Edward Snowden being a quietly retired antiques dealer on Long Island 40 years from now. Snowden will never come back to the U.S., charged as he is with espionage, unless it is in chains.

Whatever cracks in the surveillance state's armor of secrecy were pried open by *Counter-Spy* and the Church Committee have been sealed over with titanium and Dobermans on either side to guard them. The most concrete legacy of *Counter-Spy* might be the Intelligence Identities Protection Act. Passed in 1982 as a direct response to the Welch assassination, the Act makes it a crime to disclose the identities of covert agents abroad with the intent to harm U.S. intelligence activities. Today, even those in government who distrust the surveillance state are in agreement that Snowden is a criminal who must be brought to justice. It's unthinkable that any congressional aide would praise Snowden today as one praised OC-5 in a 1976 *Washington Post* article: "They're a darn good organization; their information has been accurate without exception."

But Fellwock's story also reflects a shift in today's anti-surveillance crusaders. The networks of the left have been replaced by social networks of cyber-libertarians: hackers, silicon valley entrepreneurs, freedom-of-information crusaders. There has been much tweeting and even a sparsely-attended anti-surveillance protest in D.C., but encoded in the fury has been a sense that the real extent of dissent to the surveillance state consists of simply spreading the

news of Snowden's disclosures.

“A planetary host of actively concerned and politically connected people,” **marveled** the sci-fi writer Bruce Sterling earlier this year. But “among this buzzing horde of eager online activists from a swarm of nations, what did any of them actually do for Snowden? Nothing.”

Snowden's biggest ally through his saga has been Wikileaks. By now the whistleblowing organization is essentially crippled. Its head, Julian Assange, has been reduced to an avatar beaming into various panels and tweeting his disdain for the movies made about him—the most recent one, coincidentally, is *The Fifth Estate*.

Norman Mailer, the patron saint of OC-5, was the absurd living embodiment of self-promotion, but he espoused something larger: a radical civic-mindedness, in which information was just the starting point for creating new institutions built on shared sacrifice and a devotion to democracy and transparency.

Today, Glenn Greenwald, the *Guardian* columnist who broke the Snowden story, is launching a new media company on the back of the Snowden leaks. Backing him is billionaire eBay founder Pierre Omidyar, who believes that the social change is best **brought about** by ever more innovative configurations of capitalism. *Counter-Spy* would exist today to the extent it was an inspiring enough brand.



We got the check and a cab. We were looking for an antiques store, so Fellwock could provide a glimpse of his life now. There was one in Midtown he'd been

meaning to check out.

"I realized there was nothing more I could do politically and all—I should just forget the whole thing. So I came to New York and I started working for the banks."

For a few years after *Counter-Spy* disbanded, Fellwock agonized over whether he should continue his activism. "Some days I would be political, other days I wouldn't," he said. He tried to balance his undiminished concern over covert action with a growing sense that his activism was a pointless and dangerous provocation of the security agencies. "I'm sure a lot of my friends thought I was crazy. I was conflicted. But by 1980 I realized there was nothing more I could do politically and all—I should just forget the whole thing. So I came to New York and I started working for the banks."

He worked in IT in big banks throughout the '80s and '90s, a perverse coda to a career fighting the evils of global capitalism. He'd left his office at the World Financial Center just hours before the planes hit on 9/11. He watched markets crash after September 11 from inside a multinational investment bank. Through it all, few of those close to him knew of his double life as Winslow Peck, the first NSA whistleblower. He rarely thought of those days.

"It didn't matter. It was a job I could do. I've worked here and London"—here he laughs, because he'd once been very publicly deported from Britain, in 1976, after helping an investigative journalist expose GCHQ, the UK's equivalent of NSA—"I've had a good life. I can't complain. I've survived all that shit that went on, I know a lot of people who didn't survive."

Along the way, he applied himself more and more to the antiques market. Antique-picking resembles Fellwock's *Counter-Spy* work in that it is all about

collecting and analyzing data. You have to have a picture of what stores are selling and buying at any given time so you can keep an eye out for the most lucrative wares. Fellwock keeps an extensive spreadsheet at home, tracking inventories of various stores.

When African art got big in the '80s, he would pick up pieces as they came into the docks on the Westside and sell them in Soho at 1,000 percent markups. He regularly takes reconnaissance missions to Chinatown, to see what imitation junk is coming in from Chinese factories so he doesn't buy fakes. His speciality is ancient coins. He's about to self-publish a definitive guide to buying and selling antiques. "I've seen what's out there already and it's not good," he said.

"It's all about information, you need to know what's selling," he said. Fellwock pointed to random pedestrians as we walked down the sidewalk. "Everyone around us right now is a potential customer, or a potential source. The trick is to find out what the thing is that will convince them to buy or sell."

His information on this particular antique store was not good; it was closed when we arrived. We headed to Grand Central Terminal, where Fellwock needed to catch a train. On the way, he regaled me with half-remembered tales of Norman Mailer from the '70s, like Mailer and the writer Lucian Truscott IV at the White Horse tavern: "They would get drunk and slam their heads together like bulls. Boom. I thought they were going to give themselves concussions. It was the craziest thing I've ever seen at the bar."

At Grand Central, Fellwock continued to reminisce as we stood, buffeted by the rush-hour crowd, under an arch in the main concourse from which an enormous American flag hung. The conversation turned again to regrets, and Doug Porter.

"If you talk to him, please tell him that whatever differences we had were due to the pressures we were under, and offer my apologies," Fellwock said. "If he was

for real in what he was doing, I have nothing but respect for him. Everyone who joined up with me and Tim Butz were incredibly brave.” Now he was choking up again, face red, underneath the flag.

“That was the highlight of my life, I’m sorry to say.” Fellwock threw his hands up in an act of exaggerated helplessness. “But this is the best time of my life.”

[Photo of Fellwock by Adrian Chen; images by Jim Cooke and Ramparts magazine]

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