Allard Lowenstein: An Exchange

Richard Cummings, Barney Rosset, Victor Rabinowitz, and Sanford Friedman, reply by Hendrik Hertzberg

January 30, 1986 issue

This Issue

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In response to:

The Second Assassination of Al Lowenstein from the October 10, 1985 issue



Hendrik Hertzberg's review of *The Pied Piper*, my biography of Allard Lowenstein [*NYR*, October 10, 1985] makes no mention of the vast amount of direct evidence in the book supporting the undeniable conclusion that Lowenstein worked for the CIA. For example:

- —His diary entries disclose that he was providing information to Thomas Hughes, Director of Intelligence at the State Department.
- —Secret State Department cables obtained through the Freedom of Information Act reveal that Lowenstein offered money to Spanish student groups to keep them anti-Communist.
- —Entries in Lowenstein's diary reveal he was engaged with Peace Corps volunteers in a covert operation to overthrow Dr. Hastings Banda, the right-wing president of Malawi.
- —Documents in Lowenstein's personal papers disclose that he offered money to various anti-Communist African liberation movements and anti-Communist, anti-apartheid movements in South Africa and Namibia. While traveling in Africa, Lowenstein stayed at the lavish Norfolk Hotel in

—A letter shows that in 1979, Lowenstein was paid \$7,000 by the Anglo American Corporation of South Africa for a trip there to help prevent a Communist revolution. Lowenstein reported to then Deputy Director of the CIA, Frank Carlucci, during the trip, according to an interview with Carlucci. Carlucci acknowledges that Lowenstein aided him in installing Mario Soares as prime minister of Portugal while Carlucci was ambassador there.

—Lowenstein clearly knew of the CIA's funding of the National Student Association before the disclosures of the Sixties. The CIA Vaughn Index on the NSA, released under the Freedom of Information Act, reveals that the CIA/NSA link can be traced to 1949, a year *before* Lowenstein became president of the NSA.

Lowenstein's Selective Service records, which I obtained through the Freedom of Information Act, reveal he obtained an occupational deferment while he served as president of the NSA and then an academic deferment to go to law school during the Korean war. (Lowenstein was elected president of the NSA in 1950 on the strength of a speech supporting US military intervention in Korea.) Ramparts magazine documented in 1967 that officers of the NSA who cooperated with the CIA in running the NSA's programs received such deferments prior to 1966. Ramparts never thought to obtain Lowenstein's draft status while he was president of NSA, and so overlooked his involvement. Lowenstein received his occupational deferment because of his work for the NSA involving breaking up the international student movement because of Communist influence. The conference in Stockholm at which he did this was organized by the CIA.

Lowenstein lied to *Newsday* reporter Edward Hershey when he told him he had to fight his way into the army in 1954 because of his bad eyes. In fact, Lowenstein was declared I-A and passed his physical four years earlier. His eyes were good enough to earn him the rank of "Marksman" while serving in the peacetime army in Germany.

Hertzberg lends credence to the conclusion that Lowenstein worked for the CIA when he writes in his review: "It is entirely possible that Lowenstein met CIA people during his travels, even that he traded information with them. There would be nothing scandalous in that." Traded information? Can anyone imagine the CIA station chief in Dar es Salaam extending a

warm handshake to Allard Lowenstein and saying, "Say, you're Allard Lowenstein, aren't you? I'm the CIA station chief. Let's trade information."

This is, of course, total nonsense. CIA operatives do not "trade information" with "a free-lance do-gooder of left-wing anti-Communist leanings." They do, however, trade information with other CIA operatives and informants.

Documents in Lowenstein's CIA file obtained after publication of The Pied Piper further support the Lowenstein CIA affiliation, notwithstanding Hertzberg's convoluted reasoning. On February 19, 1962, the Chief of the Personnel Security Division of the CIA received a memorandum from the Chief of the Contact Division stating: "It is requested that priority security checks be procured on Subject as described in the attachment. Our deadline is 23 February 1962 for approval to contact Subject on an ad hoc basis. Information to be discussed will be classified through 'Confidential." The language that follows, quoted out of context by Hertzberg, is: "3. Subject will be asked to respond to (word deleted) requirements pertaining to the Soviet educational system; teaching methods; calibre of faculty; subjects emphasized, etc." Lowenstein visited the Soviet Union with Mrs. Roosevelt five years earlier. This could not be a debriefing of that trip, which would have been done directly afterwards. A reasonable interpretation of this spook talk is that Lowenstein was going to be used to report on Soviet propaganda methods and recruitment activities in areas where Lowenstein had contacts and expertise, i.e., southern Africa.

According to Federal Bureau of Investigation records, an FBI informant reported on February 5, 1962 that Lowenstein twice told students he had an "affiliation with the Central Intelligence Agency." The informant was incredulous, so the matter was brought to the attention of the CIA. The February 19, 1962 memorandum states that "Subject reportedly has stated that he has done some work for the CIA. If he were used in a (word deleted) capacity, then this is an indiscretion regarding which our field representative would like to know something about the background before any contact is made."

Hertzberg would like to dismiss this language as insignificant. But the 1962 date conforms to the recruitment date given me by several intelligence operatives attached to the CIA and military intelligence who knew Lowenstein, including a US Army Major General assigned to counterintelligence. These are legitimate sources of the kind relied on by all journalists.

There are several of them and they are credible. I submit that the work Lowenstein said he performed before 1962 for the CIA was smuggling out Hans Beukes, the "colored" student from South West Africa, at the behest of the CIA. The sources who have worked for both the CIA and military intelligence reported that Lowenstein did this, and I have no reason to disbelieve it. Moreover, Hertzberg is incorrect when he insists that Lowenstein readily agreed to get Beukes out of South Africa when Beukes requested help. He resisted this request when it was made by Beukes. "Al didn't know why they should do this," Emory Bundy told me. But Lowenstein did agree to do it after he was asked to by the CIA.

Hertzberg refers to a cable in Lowenstein's CIA file in his attempt to rebut my book. From the embassy in Madrid, dated 20 September 1962, it states: "To our knowledge, he represents no one but himself in spite of propensity for name dropping." In The Pied Piper, I discuss similar cables from the embassy in Madrid to the State Department concerning Lowenstein's use of the names of Eleanor Roosevelt, Walter Reuther, and Norman Thomas and wonderment over his supply of funds and his ability to stay at an expensive suite at the Madrid Hilton. This was before Lowenstein inherited any money and at a time when his ostensible income was virtually nil. That an embassy official did not know of Lowenstein's CIA affiliation is not surprising. As several former CIA agents told me, each person working for the Agency is assigned a cryptograph to conceal his identity, even within the Agency itself.

Contrary to Hertzberg's assertion, Lowenstein's CIA file was not with Lowenstein's papers at Chapel Hill when I and a research aide examined them. When I learned from Lowenstein's sister, Dorothy DiCintio, that Gary Bellow had the file, I repeatedly tried to get him to give it to me. My last effort in the summer of 1984 was rejected by Bellow because, he said, I "couldn't be trusted with it." The file was made available to me through the efforts of Grove Press's attorney Martin Garbus after publication of The Pied Piper during the course of his battles with Ronald Tabak, who was trying to stop publication of the book and demanding changes in the manuscript under threat of litigation. Indeed, when David Sobel, a lawyer for the United States Student Association trying to get the complete CIA file on the National Student Association, requested the Lowenstein CIA file from the Lowenstein Collection at Chapel Hill, only a copy of Gary Bellow's 1975 Freedom of Information Act request was sent to him and not the CIA file of thirty-seven documents released

to Bellow. If this file was at Chapel Hill, as Bellow alleges, why then was it not released to Sobel? The answer is because it was, as Gary Bellow had told me, in his office at Harvard.

Lowenstein was clearly concerned about what the FBI and the CIA might release about his CIA affiliation under a Freedom of Information Act request. The only damaging information was the material in the portions of his CIA file that was released to him. Because of the Privacy Act, this was available to him but not to the general public.

Finally, I rely on not one but three entries in Lowenstein's diary to show that he informed on suspected Communists in the civil rights movement.

Richard Cummings Bridgehampton, New York

To the Editors:

Hendrik Hertzberg (*The Second Assassination of AI Lowenstein*) takes Grove Press to task for publishing *The Pied Piper: Allard K. Lowenstein and the Liberal Dream*, by Richard Cummings, suggesting we didn't take enough care to check the facts. He's wrong. We carefully checked the research on which Cummings based his book, including the tapes of interviews with former Lowenstein associates who contributed to the *Documentation Concerning Serious Factual Errors in Forthcoming Book by Richard Cummings Purportedly About Allard K. Lowenstein*, which has been privately circulated by Gary Bellow and others.

Hertzberg, declaring his bias in favor of Lowenstein, accepted these "documents" at face value. Had he checked, he would have discovered that many of the "documents" in this collection are clearly contradicted by these tapes in the very own voices of the authors of these "documents."

Hertzberg assures us that Lowenstein was never an agent of the CIA, treating such suspicion as if Lowenstein had been accused of membership in a criminal organization. If the CIA was a criminal organization, what does this make of such people as Reverend William Sloane Coffin and William Buckley, Jr., not to mention myself who was proud to have been asked—and accepted—to be a member of the OSS, the forerunner of the CIA. We know that Lowenstein himself boasted of his connection with the CIA in a document (originating from the CIA) cited by Hertzberg himself.

Perhaps we'll never know for sure whether Lowenstein served as a CIA agent until the CIA opens its files to the public. Cummings, in addition to his sources and interviews with many former Lowenstein intimates, also cites literally hundreds of publicly known events, associations and episodes, all thoroughly documented. Together they make an extraordinarily convincing case.

Ultimately, the issue of CIA membership really diverts our attention from the very real accomplishments in Cummings' book. *The Pied Piper*, as so many of its reviewers have noted, is an important contribution to recent American history, because it reveals like no book before it the effect on American domestic and foreign policy of our obsession with anti-Communism in the past forty years. In particular, it highlights the bankruptcy of American liberalism—the collapse of The Best and The Brightest in the face of the ogre of Communism—through the actions of one of its most attractive and articulate leaders. We are proud to have brought this book to the attention of a new generation of readers who have much to learn from our recent past.

Barney Rosset Publisher, Grove Press New York City

To the Editors:

Hendrik Hertzberg, in his review of Richard Cummings' book, The Pied Piper: Allard K. Lowenstein and the Liberal Dream, is guilty of many of the improprieties of which he accuses Cummings, at least in his treatment of Lowenstein's relationship with the National Lawyers Guild. He may have been equally guilty with respect to other of the activities of Lowenstein, but I am not sufficiently familiar enough with Lowenstein's widespread interests to be able to express an opinion. I am, however, intimately familiar with the National Lawyers Guild and its work in the South and elsewhere. I was in Georgia in 1963 and Mississippi in 1964; I was President of the National Lawyers Guild from 1967 to 1970, and have been active in its activities from the date of its organization to the present, frequently in a position of leadership. Our activity in the South in those hard years is one of the brightest stars in our crown, and we are justifiably proud of it.

In his relationship with the Guild in the South in the mid-1960s, Lowenstein played an obstructionist and divisive role. His anti-communism blinded him to the extraordinarily successful efforts of the Guild, in large part as a legal representative of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, during the tough days of 1963 and 1964. Hertzberg is quite right in noting that Lowenstein's "argument in 1964 with some of his civil rights comrades about the National Lawyers Guild caused a bitter split between them...." That split was caused by Lowenstein's unceasing attack on the participation of the Guild and its members in the civil rights struggle in the South—attacks which continued for some time thereafter.

Hertzberg's statement that the National Lawyers Guild "began as a Communist front and retained its fellow-traveling politics into the 1960s" has been repeatedly made by the Justice Department, the FBI, the House Un-American Activities Committee, the Senate Internal Security Committee, and the late Senator McCarthy. Lowenstein may have been a wonderful fellow subjectively, but objectively he accepted the judgment of all of these institutions which should have been his natural enemies, certainly in the context of the struggle in the South. James Forman, then Executive Secretary of SNCC, discusses Lowenstein's activities in some detail in his *The Making of Black Revolutionaries*. Lowenstein was not a help but an impediment in the struggle for racial justice in Mississippi, as Cummings amply demonstrates.

A word or two about the facts will dispose of this "Communist front" nonsense, although it has been made and refuted so many times that it should be unnecessary as late as 1985. Authorities with much more information on the subject than either Lowenstein or Hertzberg have conducted largescale investigations into the matter and come up with nothing. In 1940, the FBI commenced an extensive investigation of the Guild seeking to label it as a subversive organization dominated by a foreign power. Despite reported tries, J. Edgar Hoover was unable to persuade any Attorney General that he had a case until he found a sympathetic and highly partisan audience in Eisenhower's first Attorney General, Herbert Brownell, at the height of the McCarthy period in 1953. Brownell brought proceedings which dragged on until 1958, at which time the Justice Department dropped its efforts to list the Guild as a subversive organization because, as its own internal records show, its evidence of Communist control was insufficient even to make out a prima facie case.

This, of course, did not stop Hoover, who continued his investigation in the years following, again without ever having discovered enough evidence to justify any of the charges. In

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1972 the Justice Department once again reviewed the fruits of the FBI's intensive investigation, this time retroactive to 1967. Again, the Justice Department found that there had been no basis for the Communist front charge. In 1973 the FBI itself conceded there was no basis for an investigation.

Hertzberg criticizes Cummings for the failures of his research and the inadequacies of his footnotes. But your reviewer himself cites no authority at all as to his statements about the Guild and his research was patently insufficient. All of the facts as to the many governmental investigations into the Guild are matters of public record and part of the court file in an action now pending in the Federal District Court in which the National Lawyers Guild seeks to enjoin the FBI and the Justice Department from continuing the sort of harassment which has been going on on a fairly constant basis since before World War II. Hertzberg could, on request, have had access to any of this material if he had approached our office. If Hertzberg were interested in the role of the Guild in the South, inquiry could have been made of Marion Barry, the first Chairman of SNCC and now Mayor of Washington, DC, of Robert Moses, now studying at Harvard on a MacArthur Grant, Jim Forman or any one of the number of SNCC officers who are still around and available for information not only on the Guild's help to the civil rights movement, but perhaps on Lowenstein's interference with its activities.

Just a closing note to Mr. Hertzberg. The Guild is doing very well, thank you. We approach our Fiftieth Anniversary with a large and growing membership of 7,500, about 120 chapters in eighty-two cities and thirty-eight law schools, under a leadership which includes many of the lawyers who organized the Guild in 1937, many students not yet admitted to the bar, and many in between.

Victor Rabinowitz New York City

To the Editors:

For the first time since Allard Lowenstein was buried in Arlington National Cemetery has a writer made recognizable to me the remarkable and complex man who was my lifelong friend. I'm speaking, with considerable gratitude, of the just, incisive, and refreshingly accurate image created by Hendrik Hertzberg in "The Second Assassination of Al Lowenstein."

I have only one cavil. To be the editor of *The Horace Mann*

Record, the school newspaper, one had to be a senior. Since Roy Cohn was in the class of '44 and Al in the class of '45, the "competition" to which Mr. Hertzberg refers was an impossibility. If indeed Roy Cohn had designs on the editorship of the *Record*, the person who "edged (him) out" was not Al but Anthony Lewis, the *New York Times* columnist.

Sanford Friedman New York City

Hendrik Hertzberg replies:

Richard Cummings does not dispute any of the particulars of my critique of his case for calling AI Lowenstein a CIA agent. Instead, Cummings rehearses some additional items of purported evidence I didn't bother with in my review, which concentrated on less marginal claims. I can assure readers, however, that these additional bits of "evidence" are as hollow as those I demolished in my essay.

I'm tempted to leave it at that, on the grounds that the shoddiness of Cummings's evidentiary methods has already been firmly established. But I have a nagging worry that if this latest cloud of acrid smoke is left undispersed, somebody, somewhere, might think there's a fire behind it. With a sigh, therefore, I press on.

—*Hughes*. Thomas L. Hughes, now president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, was a friend of Lowenstein's from 1950 on. Under Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, Hughes was director of the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, which has no agents, no capacity for covert action or independent information-gathering, and no connection to the CIA other than the word "intelligence" in its title.

—*Spain*. The modest financial help Lowenstein arranged for anti-Franco student groups came from American liberals and socialists organized in groups like Spanish Refugee Aid, whose most prominent members included Nancy Macdonald (Mrs. Dwight Macdonald), Lillian Hellman, and Norman Thomas.

—*Banda*. The woman Cummings names in his book as his principal source for this allegation, Kristina Kleinbauer, a former student of Lowenstein's at Stanford, has described Cummings's account as—not to put too fine a point on it—"totally false," "utterly false," and "absolutely outrageous

and characterized by brazen falsity."

—Southern Africa. As in Spain, Lowenstein's activities in South Africa and Namibia were financed by private citizens, not by the CIA. As David Hawk, the former anti-Vietnam war organizer and US executive director of Amnesty International, has written: "Since Mr. Lowenstein was deservedly recognized as one of the most effective activists for whatever projects he worked on, wealthy liberals from around the country were happy to pay for his travels."

—Anglo-American Corporation/Carlucci. Ernest Wentzel, a South African lawyer and veteran opponent of the apartheid regime, arranged this particular Lowenstein trip. Wentzel did indeed get financing from Harry Oppenheimer of Anglo-American, who had also hosted visits by Andrew Young and Edward Kennedy. I fail to see what this has to do with the CIA. Lowenstein and Carlucci served together in the Carter administration and knew each other, but Carlucci describes Cummings's assertions as "flatly incorrect."

National Student Association. Cummings is correct that newly released documents suggest (though they do not establish) that the CIA-NSA link began in 1949. Even so, contrary to his assertion, there is no evidence whatever that Lowenstein knew of it, and a good deal that he did not. On the question of draft deferments, what Ramparts reported—and what has subsequently been confirmed—is that all NSA officers and staff received deferments, whether or not they were among the carefully screened few who were let in on the secret. However, this arrangement didn't begin until 1953. Lowenstein got a deferment in 1950 because Eleanor Roosevelt and other notables wrote letters for him to his draft board.

—*Trading information*. Cummings finds it inconceivable that a CIA station chief might have talked with Lowenstein unless Lowenstein was a CIA agent. This view of the CIA as an entirely closed system, talking only to itself, is preposterous.

—*CIA memorandum*. Cummings offers no evidence for his theory that the February 19, 1962, Contact Division memorandum was part of a plot to recruit Lowenstein to report on Soviet activities in southern Africa. Nor can such evidence be found in this document or anywhere else. There is, however, evidence for a less sinister interpretation in documents Cummings does not mention. A cable dated October 15, 1955—sender and recipient unmarked—reads in

full as follows:

- [Words missing] REPORTS THAT IDEN A [identified on an attached sheet as Eleanor Roosevelt] WHILE IN EUROPE TOLD IDEN B [identified as Al Lowenstein] THAT IDEN A WOULD VISIT RUSSIA IF ANOTHER INVITATION RECEIVED AND WOULD LIKE IDEN B [words missing] TO GO ALONG. IDEN B LATER RECEIVED WORD FROM IDEN A THAT IDEN A RECEIVED SECOND INVITATION [words missing]
- 2. IDEN B STATES VISIT PROBABLY WILL TAKE PLACE EARLY FALL 1956. HE INTENDS STUDY RUSSIAN THREE MONTHS AFTER DISCHARGE FROM SERVICE AND ACCOMPANY IDEN A TO VISIT UNIVERSITY CENTERS WHILE IDEN A TIED UP WITH RUSSIAN BIGWIGS. END OF MESSAGE

Another document, this one typed on a form and evidently intended as a draft message from CIA headquarters to some overseas station, is dated January 24, 1962, one month before the memo Cummings quotes. The text of this document reads in full:

- [lines missing] Two communications of 15 October 1955
 [words missing] stated that one AL LOWENSTEIN
 intended to study the Russian language for three months
 following his discharge from the service and to
 accompany Eleanor Roosevelt on a trip to the USSR in
 early fall of 1956. Subject planned to visit University
 centers while in the Soviet Union. This AL
 LOWENSTEIN is possibly identifiable with Subject
 [lines missing].
- 2. Headquarters would appreciate knowing the extent of the Station's interest in this individual [lines missing].

Readers now have the full documentary record before them, and may interpret it as they see fit. My guess is that somebody in the CIA was preparing a report on the Soviet university system, searched the files for relevant material, found the reference to Lowenstein's visit six years before, and sought permission to interview him.

—FBI memorandum. Lowenstein liked to create an aura of mystery and power around himself, especially for the benefit of his student followers; he was an incurable name- and organization-dropper. It would have been consistent with his character to hint to a student that he knew people in the CIA (just as it would have been inconsistent with his character actually to work for that agency). In any case, what Cummings

neglects to mention is that the February 19, 1962, memorandum was followed up. In a March 29, 1962, memo, the New York office of the FBI wrote: "On January 9, 1961, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) advised that the subject [Lowenstein] has never been connected with CIA and CIA has no additional information concerning him."

—Sources. In his book Cummings says his "sources" were one person who "served with US Army Intelligence" and "others" who "are close to the CIA." Now he claims, for the first time, that his sources were "attached to the CIA" and "worked for" the CIA. He does not explain this sudden improvement in the quality of his "sources." Nor does he explain how, if "each person working for the Agency is assigned a cryptograph to conceal his identity, even within the Agency itself," his "sources" managed to crack the code.

—CIA file. Gary Bellow had a photocopy of Lowenstein's forty-eight-page CIA file, but the original was in the Lowenstein papers at Chapel Hill. Cummings was given unlimited access to the papers. It is easy to imagine how Cummings might have missed the file, since he spent less than three days looking through the Lowenstein papers, which, at the time, consisted of about five hundred boxes of mostly unsorted, unindexed material.

Barney Rosset, Cummings's publisher, asserts that "many" of the letters and affidavits collected in *Documentation Concerning* are contradicted by Cummings's tapes, but he does not offer a single example. Therefore it is impossible to evaluate this claim.

Astonishingly, Rosset also writes: "Probably we'll never know for sure whether Lowenstein was a CIA agent until the CIA opens its files to the public." If this is Rosset's view, why did he have no qualms about publishing a book that repeatedly and categorically states that Lowenstein was a CIA agent?

I share Victor Rabinowitz's indignation at the efforts of government police agencies to harass the National Lawyers Guild and label it a subversive organization. The fact remains, however, that the Guild was dominated by Communists and their political allies during the first decades of its existence. One need not be a McCarthyite to reach this conclusion. For example, Harvey Klehr, in his carefully researched study *The Heyday of American Communism: The Depression Decade* (Basic Books, 1984), lists the Guild among the "party auxiliaries" of the late 1930s (page 402).

Still, my characterization of the Guild as a "Communist front" went too far. In its early days the Guild included anti-Communist liberals like Morris Ernst, Adolph Berle, and Abe Fortas among its members; they resigned *en masse* in 1940 after the organization's support of the Nazi-Soviet pact made its pro-Communist bias unmistakable. During the 1960s the Guild was an alliance that included Communists, fellow travelers, non-Communist New Leftists, and liberals. I should not have oversimplified this more complex reality.

Finally, I'm grateful to Sanford Friedman for correcting me on Roy Cohn and the school paper at Horace Mann. I should have known better than to rely on *The Pied Piper* (page 14) for even so inconsequential a detail.

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