

The first of these, incidentally, was "Owen Lattimore: Expert's Expert," described in Chapter 9.

By 1946 he had decided that there was need for a publication that would concentrate on fighting Communism, and this idea was brought to a head by the Reverend John Cronin, Secretary of the Catholic Welfare Conference in Washington. Father Cronin invited Kohlberg to attend a meeting with a group of ex-FBI men and Ben Mandel, who was at that time with the House Committee on Un-American Activities. At this meeting it was decided that Isaac Don Levine would be an ideal man to edit the magazine if he could be persuaded to accept the position. Mr. Levine, a well-known writer, had been a foreign correspondent and was an expert on Communism.

Mr. Mandel arranged to bring Mr. Kohlberg and Father Cronin to the Levine home in Norwalk, Connecticut, in June 1946, where they outlined their plan. This was to establish a publication and a research service in the area of Communism.

"It was not completely clear to me what such a research service would be," Mr. Levine said, "but I knew no publication of the type we discussed could function without a research staff.

"I took the matter under consideration and after I thought the matter over for a few weeks I said I would undertake the assignment, with the understanding that I would draw no salary for the first year or two. I said I would try to work out some kind of deal for reprint rights and whatever accrued to the magazine from the *Reader's Digest* would go to me, but I would not be a burden on the payroll which Mr. Kohlberg generously undertook to maintain."

It was estimated that \$25,000 would be needed to get the magazine started and keep it going for a year. It was to be published monthly in a pocket-size format, about the

size of *Reader's Digest*, and to consist of some 48 to 64 pages. Another \$25,000 was allocated for the research organization which Kohlberg described as "a sort of Un-American Activities Committee or FBI file system for the use of the magazine and for others interested." This was to be run by the former FBI men. The entire \$50,000 was pledged by Alfred Kohlberg, who also provided office space in a building at 240 Madison Avenue, New York, which belonged in part to him. The magazine, called *Plain Talk*, set up shop in the front half of the second floor of the building, and the research department was installed in the rear wing of the building on the 12th floor, reachable only by the freight elevators through the 38th Street entrance.

In a matter of weeks the research service led to a break in the organization, one that was precipitated by Isaac Don Levine.

"I was responsible for it," he explained. "I discovered that this research service was being made available to industrial concerns, merchants, unions, and others who wanted information about Communists. I had no objection to this kind of a service but I had objections to an independent journal being connected with it. So we parted and out of the group severed from *Plain Talk* came a publication called *Counterattack*." Mr. Kohlberg had no connection with this newsletter.

As editor, Isaac Don Levine insisted on running *Plain Talk* as he saw fit, and his aim was to put out a magazine that would "carry the message on a factual exposé basis to the elite, the thinking people, the leaders—editors, clergy, educators, librarians, people on the hill, our policy makers." The editor and the publisher did not always see eye to eye on how this should be done.

"There developed a humorous kind of war between Kohlberg and me very early," he said, "I think he felt, with some justification, and so did Father Cronin, that I

was ungovernable, that I had my own standards and that I was overriding and overconfident in my judgments. A humorous tug-of-war developed on the subject of libel. Kohlberg, who was financially liable for the enterprise, felt that the risk of libel, the gamble of libel, was worth it and would make for publicity, and publicity would help the magazine. I thought we had enough publicity, but above all I felt that libel should be avoided at all costs. That even if you knew something to be a fact, if you didn't have the evidence you should not rush into print with it.

"I think that is one of the keys to his character. Kohlberg felt that if it's the truth bring it out and let the devil take the hindmost. So more than once and more than twice we had semi-humorous and semi-serious differences. If we agreed it was a fact, we disagreed as to the available proof of the fact. In the field of Communism everything is subject to that issue.

"There was another element of friction that developed. A silent sort. Kohlberg would dash off a piece of copy of six or seven pages that I considered poor composition and I would reduce it to a page or two and send it back to Miss Murray, his secretary, and ask her to have him make such changes as to facts which he alone could make. Still I cannot recall a single strident argument with him or a strong session. I think we had too much mutual respect, and he recognized that I had to be the boss in my shop."

Alfred Kohlberg obviously enjoyed his role as a publisher. From the time he had worked as a campus correspondent at Berkeley he liked to write for publication. And even though Levine was critical of his writing, saying, "he was not sufficiently disciplined in the copy he turned out," this did not discourage Kohlberg. Too, he liked to associate with writers, and as a magazine publisher he was able to meet more of them. And there was another asset. Levine told how, as *Plain Talk* gained in influence, Kohlberg found doors being opened to him. Senators and people of prominence who had been diffi-