

29 SEP 1974

IA: Silent Partner of Foreign Policy

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FROM THE ONSET of the Cold War to the outbreak of Watergate, covert warfare was been a silent partner of American foreign policy.

It was, in the beginning, a morally simple proposition for most Americans. The world was divided into two political hemispheres, one Free and one Communist. The two systems confronted each other around the globe. The rules of engagement were that anything went — preferably short of all-out war.

In the back alley combat of the Cold War years, the Central Intelligence Agency emerged as the secret team with the capability for bribing unions and chiefs of state, for training private armies and — if need be — for toppling governments.

Its leadership was composed of men who fought bravely and well together during World War II, many of them veterans of General William J. "Wild Bill" Donovan's Office of Strategic Services. They were, on the whole, sons of the American establishment — products of comfortable homes, good private colleges and a shared sense of dedication to what they perceived to be traditional American values and unstinting opposition to the common threat: communism.

One of these men was William Egan Colby, a man of meticulously gray quality, who jumped behind enemy lines in Nazi-occupied Europe, who planned and administered the deeply controversial "pacification" program in South Vietnam and who rose patiently through the secret bureaucracy of the CIA's directorate of operations (more popularly "dirty tricks") to the top job, director of central intelligence.

He finds himself today at the center of one of those recurrent public storms which engulfs the CIA when it stumbles by mistake out of the cold into the footlights of public attention.

THE CONTROVERSY centers more on whether the United States should abandon its covert warfare capability and concentrate instead on the intelligence-gathering mission for which it was chartered in 1947.

"This is a legitimate question," Colby acknowledged during a recent

teach-in on CIA covert operations conducted on Capitol Hill. He concluded, however, that the answer is no. "I can envision situations in which the United States might well need to conduct covert action in the face of some new threat that developed in the world."

President Ford was less qualified in his last press conference. Asked whether, under international law, the United States has a right to subvert governments such as the one headed by the late Salvador Allende in Chile, the President said in effect: Sure, everyone does it.

Until Watergate the perception of most Americans of political espionage were formed by films and novels set in exotic foreign capitals against a background of creaky rattan and slow whirling fans.

But the Watergate tapes, with their revelations of "enemies lists," buggings, wiretappings, political fund laundering and the like, gave us a mild taste of how things are on the wrong end of a covert warfare capability.

Before Watergate, the Vietnam war had eroded public confidence in the presidency and sewn distrust of the unbridled growth of the executive branch. The CIA has been, in effect, a President's army.

Also, the Nixon-Kissinger policy of detente with the Communist superpowers muddled the near, bipolar view of the world in the early years of the CIA.

And so, when new details of the U.S. secret war against the Allende government in Chile surfaced recently, well over a year after the CIA role in Chile first came to light, the conditions were ripe for a backfire of public and congressional indignation.

President Ford did little to assuage the growing clamor of criticism with his declaration that the covert political operations against Allende were "in the best interests of the people in Chile."

Secretary of State Kissinger put it with even more brutal directness during a meeting of the National Security Council's super-secret "Forty Committee" on June 27, 1970—some two months before Chile's presidential election.

"I don't see why we need to stand by and watch a country go Communist due to the irresponsibility of its own people," said Kissinger, the architect of the American detente policy, according to unchallenged classified minutes of the proceeding.

The dispute over whether the United States should be engaged in secret political warfare abroad is not a new one. Nothing was said in the national security charter establishing the CIA about political espionage.

When trapped in public disputes over clandestine operations abroad, CIA directors present and past pointed to a provision of the 1947 National Security Act authorizing the CIA "to perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

Authors David Wise and Thomas Ross, pioneer investigative journalists of the CIA, described this as the agency's "secret charter" for carte blanche intervention. The charter is amplified in a series of highly classified National Security Council intelligence directives (described in the intelligence trade as "nonskids") as well as secret presidential authorizations.

President Truman lived to deplore the secret warfare capability of the CIA, which was created under his administration, because of its penchant for secret warfare enterprises. It was, he told biographer Merle Miller "a mistake . . . If I'd known what was going to happen I never would have done it . . . They (the CIA) don't have to account to anybody."

As far as Truman was concerned, the business of the CIA was intelligence gathering. In fact, Truman was responsible for implanting the covert war role in the CIA when he merged the Office of Policy Coordination and Office of Special Operations, both espionage organizations, into the CIA. At the time he may not have realized the consequences of his action.

Political scientist Harry Howe Ransom of Vanderbilt University writes that "one searches in vain in the public records . . . for any evidence of congressional intent or acquiescence to assign the functions of foreign political action or subversion to the Central Intelligence Agency."

Yet the secret war-making capability of the CIA continued to grow through the years and exercise an even greater influence on American foreign policy. It is a tribute to the expansionary thrust of the executive branch, especially when unchecked by serious congressional oversight.

There are no official figures on the size or spending programs of the clandestine services of CIA. The only published figures, which were subject to pre-publication CIA review, are contained in "The CIA and the Cult of Intelligence" by former intelligence officers Victor Marchetti and John D. Marks.

00644

It comprises, they say, 6,000 people and a budget of \$440 million. Within this overall total for clandestine services, some 1,800 persons are said to be assigned specifically to covert action, and \$260 million is budgeted for such operations.

Coordinator in Chile

A BROAD, clandestine operations are centered in CIA stations, usually domiciled in a secure wing of American embassies. In-country CIA operations are managed by station chiefs who operate under foreign service covers, such as political officer, labor attache or consul.

In Chile at the time of Allende's downfall, the secret programs to unsettle the incumbent government were coordinated through veteran CIA operative Raymond A. Warren, who was listed on embassy rolls as a member of the political section. Warren's cover was not deep enough to prevent his house from being stoned by supporters of the late president in the final months of 1973.

The 51-year-old operative arrived in Chile for his second tour in October, 1970, according to the State Department Biographical Register. He returned within a month of a Forty Committee meeting in Washington which, according to the reported testimony of Colby, resulted in a \$350,000 authorization to influence members of the Chilean Congress to oppose Allende in a run-off election.

It was during the same period that the International Telephone and Telegraph Co. through former CIA Director John A. McCone, then an ITT consultant and board member, offered \$1 million to the Nixon administration to seek Allende's defeat in the congressional run-off. The ITT offer was declined and the Forty Committee authorization cancelled on the grounds that the Congressional bribery scheme would be unworkable. Allende won—for the time being.

The programs of destabilization aimed at the Allende government were strongly reminiscent of those used in previous operations in Chile and Brazil. Strikes and demonstrations were funded and orchestrated with the help of the local CIA station.

Middle-class groups, hostile to Allende, were organized into such protests as the familiar "March of the Empty Pots" conducted by housewives banging empty cooking ware in suburban neighborhoods.

Trade unions were conscripted into the covert battle through regional labor organizations which coordinate with the American Institute for Free Labor Development, the foreign organizing arm of the AFL-CIO.

There has been evidence that goon squads and terrorist groups, such as the neo-fascist *Patria y Libertad*

("Country and Liberty") were recruited in the battle against Allende.

Two weeks before the military coup which ousted Allende a high-ranking executive of Chile's secret police told Washington Post special correspondent Marlise Simons that the CIA funds were being funneled to *Patria y Libertad*.

Because covert action programs are hatched under the heaviest secrecy restraints in government they remain obscure to Congress or even high officials in the executive branch, except in the rare cases where they are blown by a witting informant.

Probably the most detailed and authoritative account of covert warfare as it is conducted on a day-to-day basis at the station level will be contained in the forthcoming book by former CIA clandestine operations officer Philip B. F. Agee who was based in three Latin American stations—Ecuador, Uruguay and Mexico—during the 1960s.

Agee's manuscript describes how a local CIA station with a handful of operatives and an adequate budget of black funds can manipulate political parties, trade unions, public rallies, police bureaucracies and political leaders in small countries such as Ecuador.

Richard M. Bissell Jr., who was the CIA's deputy director for plans (head of the dirty tricks department) at the time of the Bay of Pigs spoke openly of the vulnerability of countries like Ecuador and Uruguay to CIA operations.

"The underdeveloped world," Bissell told a 1968 Council of Foreign Relations meeting on intelligence, "presents greater opportunities for covert intelligence collection, simply because governments are much less highly organized; there is less security consciousness, and there is apt to be more actual or potential diffusion of power among parties, localities, organizations and individuals outside of the central governments."

Because of these conditions the Third World has been an inviting test laboratory not only for intelligence gathering but for secret warfare as well.

The map of the world is dotted with small countries which became battlegrounds of covert warfare because they were designated as the front lines in the anti-Communist struggle.

In the early 1960's the CIA organized the "clandestine army" of Meo Tribesmen in Laos, an ethnic minority which has been savagely decimated by more than a decade of war ending last year in the same inconclusive political stalemate in which it all began.

Bay of Pigs

THE BAY OF PIGS invasion attempt in 1969 became President John F. Kennedy's most egregious foreign policy blunder. Though Dulles and Bissell were fired in the anguished

aftermath, the Bay of Pigs raised no serious doubts about the CIA's secret warfare role, which by then was well institutionalized.

In 1962 and 1963 the CIA intervened massively against the government of Brazil's President Joao Goulart with secret political funding and manipulation of the press and labor movement, principal tools of covert political war. The Goulart government, considered too leftist for Washington's tastes (it had expropriated an ITT subsidiary) was overthrown by a military coup on April Fool's Day, 1964, which closed

Congress, liquidated political opposition, shut down newspapers, jailed critics and instituted the systematic practice of torture for political interrogation.

In Vietnam, which began as a low-profile intervention on the part of the United States in the retreating shadow of French influence, the CIA played a key role in propping up our hand-picked candidate for premier, Ngo Dinh Diem, and in his demise after eight controversial years of rule. It administered pacification and counter-terror programs which non-Communist critics of the Saigon regime have branded as programs of repression.

The catalogue could go on: The overthrow of the Mossadegh government in Iran in 1953, engineered with the assistance of former CIA operative Kermit Roosevelt; the toppling of the Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954 with U.S. arms and a CIA air force; covert support of anti-Sukarno rebel elements in Indonesia in 1958; assisting Bolivian troops in the capture of Che Guevara in 1967.

Covert warfare operations are hatched within a narrow spectrum of the intelligence bureaucracy from which dissent and countervailing interests are excluded. Under the system of security classification in which the clandestine services operate, those cleared for access to information are unlikely to be critics or trouble-makers.

Plans for the Bay of Pigs invasion, in many respects the classic covert warfare scenario, were restricted to a small working group in clandestine services. Even the highest officials in the analytical branch of the CIA, the directorate of intelligence, were kept in the dark.

The result, as former National Security Council staffer Morton H. Halperin recently described it, was that "when Mr. Allen Dulles, the director of Central Intelligence, informed the President that the chances of success were very high, this opinion was based entirely on the views of the covert operators planning the Bay of Pigs invasion and on his own hunches . . ."

00645

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Kissinger's Role

TODAY the management of the U.S. secret warfare capability is centered in Kissinger in his capacity as national security advisor to the President. Kissinger presides over the Forty Committee, the top forum for the conduct of covert operations, whose other members are Colby, Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Joseph J. Sisco, Deputy Defense Secretary William P. Clements Jr. and Gen. George S. Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Kissinger is the only one with continuous service since the beginning of the Nixon Administration. As both Secretary of State and head of the national security apparatus, Kissinger has consolidated immense control over the intelligence community—probably more than any executive official in the nation's history, more than most Presidents.

On the issue of maintaining a covert warfare program he has made himself clear. Kissinger wants to maintain it for those situations in which the President and his chief advisors want to use it.

In the case of Chile, Kissinger's willingness to punch the covert warfare buttons was well demonstrated even though there is a serious question whether the late President Allende and his "socialism in democracy" experiment represented a compelling threat to U.S. national security.

The main threat in Chile was to a number of U.S. multinational corporations, such as ITT and the copper companies, whose assets were in the process of being nationalized through negotiation under a policy which had the endorsement of the Chilean Congress in 1971.

President Ford's post-facto justification two weeks ago of the covert programs against Allende was based on an alleged scheme by the socialist government to destroy the press and opposition political parties. During the three years of Allende's rule the opposition press, led by the influential El Mercurio newspapers, continued to print. Political parties, including virulently anti-Allende factions calling openly for insurrection, continued to function.

Only after Allende's death and the overthrow of his government by the military junta on Sept. 11, 1973, did the events occur which the earlier CIA intervention was supposed to prevent.

As in Brazil nine years earlier, the Chilean junta closed the Congress, shut down opposition newspapers and banned all political parties.

Trouble Spots

CIA DIRECTOR Colby, at the recent Washington conference on covert operations, indicated that there

were no current programs of significance now underway.

Looking at the world, however, through the crisis binoculars in the White House west basement and CIA's Langley headquarters, there are several tempting trouble spots which could be ideal candidates for secret political intervention.

In Italy, which is wracked by economic turmoil, the Communist Party could rise to its most powerful point of influence since the end of World War II. The situation is strikingly analogous to the post-war period when CIA in Italy, France and Greece moved into a position of some influence in the internal politics of those countries.

There have been widespread accusations in the Italian press of CIA financing of right-wing terrorist groups coordinated through the Italian secret police, the Servizio Intelligentsia Difesa (SID). It is alleged that the SID is conducting a "strategy of tension" by provoking extremist right and left wing activity in order to justify strong governmental security measures.

In the Persian Gulf the steady rise of oil prices by the producer nations threaten to destabilize the economies of the industrial world. Both President Ford and Secretary Kissinger have issued stern warnings of unspecified retribution to the oil price increases by the United States and Western nations. It is one of those situations, to which Colby referred, in which it might be preferable to have an alternative to sending in the Marines.

In Greece there has been a national convulsion of anti-American feeling which could threaten military base arrangements considered vital to both NATO and U.S. operations along Europe's southern flank. The CIA has been publicly associated with the military junta which came to power in 1967 and, with some justification, the agency has become a political bogey man to opponents of junta rule.

Any one of the three points could justify a stronger case for covert intervention than was Chile, should anyone wish to argue it.

Certainly the machinery of covert intervention has begun rolling. Contingency plans have been drawn up and it would be extraordinary if options have not already been discussed by Kissinger, wearing his national security advisorship hat, with his Forty Committee colleagues.

If action is recommended, it will come in the form of a formal recommendation from Kissinger to the President. Kissinger's memorandum will have all the awesome authority of the national security bureaucracy behind it. Only a handful of official men in Washington will be privy to the decision—as well as what flows from it. No one but the President could effectively question it.

If past behavior is any guide, Congress will receive perfunctory briefings after the fact.

Congressional oversight of CIA operations has been almost a laughing stock on Capitol Hill. It is clear that both the Senate and House overseers of CIA had the scantiest notion, if any at all, on what had been going on in Chile in 1970.

"You can say that I was very surprised," Sen. Stuart Symington (D-Mo.) remarked after recently hearing Colby's testimony on covert programs mounted against Allende between 1970 and 1973—details of which had already leaked to The Washington Post and New York Times.

Symington is one of a privileged handful of senators and congressmen who have been designated as legislative overseers of the CIA and are supposedly kept up to date by the agency on all major clandestine activities.

The attitude of the overseers is best typified by the remark of Sen. John Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the Senate Armed Service Committee and senior congressional overseer on intelligence matters.

"This agency," he told his colleagues in November, 1971, "is conducted in a splendid way. As has been said, spying is spying . . . You have to make up your mind that you are going to have an intelligence agency and protect it as such, and shut your eyes some and take what is coming."

Stennis' subcommittee counterpart on the House side is Rep. Lucien Nedzi (D-Mich.), who has taken his responsibilities more seriously than most congressmen associated with the oversight role. He is briefed on a biweekly basis by CIA officials and has become an important target for friendly co-option by the agency.

Nedzi doesn't feel that it would be appropriate for his subcommittee to push the investigation any further into CIA's programs of political and economic sabotage in Chile.

"It is obvious to us that the CIA's actions were approved by the administration," he explained. "It was carrying out the foreign policy of the government. Foreign policy is outside our jurisdiction."

Foreign policy is the jurisdiction of the House and Senate Foreign Affairs Committees. But CIA won't talk in any detail to those committees. Colby will talk on operational matters only to the Armed Service subcommittees designated to review his agency's operations.

An interesting test is in prospect which will illuminate the paradox of congressional overseership of the CIA. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee, supposedly conducting a study of the CIA undercover role in Chile, has formally asked Nedzi for a transcript of Colby's bombshell testimony detail-

00646

ing the 1970 interventions.

It would be a major political surprise if the House Armed Service Committee accedes to the request. Should the Senate committee call Colby it is doubtful that he would talk with the candor with which he addressed the two Armed Service subcommittees.

And so the prospect is for an investigative stalemate in Congress on Chile.

Disciplinary Action

ALTHOUGH the House Oversight committee balked at pursuing the CIA's trail in Chile, it showed great alacrity in beginning what could become disciplinary proceedings against Rep. Michael Harrington (D-Mass.), the House member who blew the whistle on Colby's testimony in letters to the chairman of the House and Senate Foreign Relations Committees.

It was on Harrington's initiative that Colby was invited to testify before the Nedzi subcommittee on CIA activities in Chile. He was the only member of the House outside the Oversight subcommittee who took the trouble to read the testimony, which was kept under lock and key and made available to members only on request.

And so the question of whether covert operations of the CIA should be abolished may be academic. Congressional leadership, the President, the Secretary of State have all declared themselves openly or privately against any such change.

Yet the record shows that many of our secret interventions have been of dubious benefit to national security. In some instances they have been highly damaging. It is hard to believe that the CIA buries only its successes, of which we hear little.

The hallmark of covert operations — the doctrine of "plausible deniability" — flies in the face of the common assumption that public officials in the American system should be both accountable and moderately truthful.

Plausible deniability was the terrible watchword of the Watergate scandal, which was the very embodiment of the notion of secret intervention coming home to roost.

00647