Approved For Release 2006/08/21 : CIA-RDP66B00403R000500090008-8

CIA's Critical Time

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

For the Central Intelligence Agency to make public, as it has recently, its estimates and views on the Soviet economy (which are discussed on pages 188 and 189) is something new on the part of this much-criticised but traditionally silent service. In Washington there is much speculation about this departure, which has been received with a minimum of enthusiasm at the State Department. One of the motives of Mr McCone, the head of CIA, is said to have been a desire to improve the agency's "image" which has been frayed as a result of its operations in Cuba and Vietnam.

This battering may also account in part for the intensity of its current recruiting drive. In the September number of *Scientific American* there appeared a modest advertisement headed, surprisingly, "The Central Intelligence Agency." It offered careers to scientists in Washington and elsewhere, and added "The work IS classified." More recently Mr Max Wiecks, the CIA's recruiting officer in New York, held a luncheon meeting for university officials in charge of appointments for graduates. The agency, he said, sought to recruit students of economics, politics, history, geography, languages, science and mathematics, and would compete with private business and the universities to get them. "Don't treat this as a joke," Mr Wiecks warned his audience. "Remember, the enemy could profit by that."

The habit of regarding the CIA as a joke has tended to spread in Washington during the past few years—the wags have dubbed it "McConey Island." But, as the Hoover Commission admitted in 1955, attracting bright young graduates into intelligence can never be easy. Few trained scholars relish the prospect of working under conditions of maximum security. Recent congressional discussion of a "CIA Retirement Act of 1963 for Certain Employees" underlines the danger of redundancy. And CIA's largely-deserved reputation as a "hard-line" agency undoubtedly repels at least a proportion of those who might otherwise be willing to work for it: the eagle on the CIA's insignia stares fixedly to the right.

Nor have the agency's relations with the State Department shown much sign of improvement. Following the Bay of Pigs episode in Cuba, President Kennedy reminded each American ambassador abroad of his personal responsibility for overseeing the activities of all American officials resident in his jurisdiction. But this did not prevent Mr John Richardson, the CIA chief in Saigon, from continuing to buttress the Diem regime last autumn while Ambassador Lodge was attempting to modify or even to undermine it. The only way Mr Lodge could assert his authority was by having his rival recalled to Washington. The problem is that local CIA officials owe allegiance to neither the ambassador nor the State Department, but to a powerful agency in Washington which, as events in Vietnam demonstrated, is itself capable of influencing policy.

Events in Vietnam also demonstrated the disadvantages of housing fact-gathering and "special operations" under the same roof. As one expert commentator has put it, agents trying both to collect information and to bolster up or overthrow a foreign government "may develop a less than objective sense for distinguishing between fact and aspiration." In Saigon the CIA found itself both assessor and assessed. But to separate the two functions would not be easy: operatives well placed for collecting clandestine information are often also well placed for conducting covert operations. Moreover, the creation of a separate special-operations agency would almost certainly lead to duplication and conflict. During 1961 a committee under General Taylor toyed with the idea of transferring the bulk of the CIA's covert operations to the Defence Department. But this solution had the obvious drawback of ensuring that the uniformed services, and hence American prestige, would become involved as soon as any paramilitary undertaking became a matter of public knowledge. In the event, routine operations were left in the CIA's hands, with control to be transferred to the Defence Department only if a particular venture grew big enough to warrant open military participation.

America's difficulties in Vietnam point to another endemic problem of intelligence: evaluation. It is one thing to collect crude data, another to make sense of it, yet another to make predictions based on it. Sometimes assumptions about policy intrude on the assessment of data; occasionally an agency develops a strong institutional commitment to a given position on policy. These dangers are magnified the more intelligence becomes centralised. In this field, although under Mr Kennedy it had a powerful rival in the State Department's intelligence office, CIA remains paramount; its head is not merely "Director of CIA" but "Director of Central Intelligence." In the stormy aftermath of the Bay of Pigs, top Administration advisers suggested that the functions of fact-collection and evaluation be separated and that an independent "Co-ordinator of Intelligence" be appointed. Eventually Mr John McCone was named Director without any major reforms being instituted but, in January, 1962, President Kennedy did write to Mr McCone advising him to delegate routine operational work and to concentrate on his primary task of co-ordination and evaluation.

Most of the CIA's problems are insoluble: they would arise in some form no matter what the institutional structure. For this reason, both Congress and the Executive have looked to the creation of some permanent mechanism of surveillance. As early as 1953 a Bill for the setting up of a Joint Committee on Foreign Intelligence was introduced in the House of Representatives and in 1956 the Senate devoted two days to debating a Bill. The proposal has been revived in recent months, but it is still stoutly opposed by the Administration: quite apart from breaches of security which might occur, no President wishes to see his lines of authority over the CIA fouled by zealous legislators. To forestall this possibility in 1956 President Eisenhower appointed an independent, lay consultative committee. This was reactivated in 1961 and renamed the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. How often it meets, or whether it accomplishes anything, no one is quite sure. Its present chairman, Mr Clark Clifford, an old friend of President Johnson, is reputed to know little of intelligence matters but has considerable skill as a bureaucratic politician and this rather than expertise may be what the job requires. Just before his death, however, President Kennedy called for a new study of all intelligence activities to improve their efficiency and increase their co-ordination. Mr Johnson has appointed to conduct it, under the supervision of Mr McCone, representatives of the State Department, the services and the CIA itself. Whatever its conclusions, of the intelligence community in general it must in fairness be said: its successes often go unrecorded, its failures are trumpeted to all the world.

MORI/CDF

Approved For Release 2006/08/21 : CIA-RDP66B00403R000500090008-8