

LOOK
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A former Ambassador says

A FEW KIND WORDS FOR THE CIA

It's OPEN SEASON ON THE Central Intelligence Agency. Just about everybody, from the California New Left to the Arizona Old Right, has been taking potshots at one agency of our Government that can't talk back. The revelation that it has helped finance through foundations some cultural and student groups seems to have aroused even more indignation than the Bay of Pigs fiasco six years ago. Editorial-page cartoonists are again caricaturing the foxy-faced little men in trench coats with CIA on their hatbands, and any mention of the Agency is good for a snicker on the cocktail-party circuit. CIA is once more a dirty initial.

And as usual, the CIA has had to keep quiet. It's the silent service that is never able to brag about its frequent successes nor confess its occasional failures. Even its friends on the outside have to be careful about what they say for fear of violating security. And yet, having seen quite a bit of CIA operations during my five years as a U.S. Ambassador, from 1961 to 1966, I feel like saying that I'm sorry about the recent furore and sorrier still about its possible consequences. For the exposé in *Ramparts* magazine has succeeded in doing what Communist propagandists have tried for years, in vain, to accomplish: the slandering of American students and scholars abroad and the discrediting of much of the good work done by our private foundations.

Carl Rowan, who was, like me, a Kennedy-appointed ambassador, recently asked in his newspaper column: "... [are] the benefits to 'freedom' accruing from these exposés of the CIA ... great enough to balance out the damage done to our security"?

I don't believe that anybody should answer "yes" to this question without first taking the following insufficiently appreciated facts into consideration:

1. The CIA is primarily concerned with the collection and evaluation of intelligence from a variety of sources. Its 15,000 employees are neither spooks, jackasses nor supermen, as they are so often and so variously depicted in fiction; they are for the most part calm, studious, deskbound professionals who never do the kind of things James Bond does. Nor is the Agency by any stretch of the imagination "an invisible government." Abroad, CIA people assigned to our overseas missions

2. The CIA is also in the business of watching and countering the actions of the Soviet KGB and other Communist intelligence services. Unhappily, the cold war is by no means over. I have seen at firsthand and close range in Africa how much effort and money is spent by our adversaries to bribe, deceive, subvert and undermine the potential leaders of these new young nations. And I have been gratified, as an American, that we have been able to alert our friends and help protect African independence and nonalignment--thanks in part to the CIA. The information we have been able to furnish free governments about the identity and activities of KGB agents among others has been invaluable. For the latter's activities are both far-flung and intensive. Between 60 and 70 percent of all Soviet-bloc diplomatic personnel in Asia and Africa are intelligence agents in disguise. And among Communist newsmen, the proportion is even higher. Compared to the opposition, we are quite thin on the ground; but then, our mission in these countries is not to subvert but to help prevent subversion.

3. Indirect CIA financing of student and cultural activity has been negligible compared to what the other side has been doing. The Russians alone are estimated to be spending \$10 million a year in recruiting and proselytizing youth groups. Total CIA subsidies to counter this campaign since the early 1950's have been less than a third of this sum. The beneficiaries of funding have not--as implied in the recent exposés--been bought, badgered or corrupted by the CIA. In fact, most of them didn't even know where the money was coming from. Unlike their fellow students from the East, they were not expected to take orders, perform espionage functions or even promote official U.S. views on foreign policy.

Then why all the fuss? I think part of the reason is that the CIA has both an undeservedly sinister reputation and the wrong kind of name to be in the business of supporting activities that are peripheral to its intelligence-gathering mission. The British perform this function more discreetly. Student, youth and cultural affairs are handled by the British Council, a privately run but government-supported institution. The French work through their Ministry of Education and the *Alliance Française*. Their CIA counterparts manage to keep far away and out of sight--which is where they belong. This is not to say that Britain or France are "closed" societies. It's just that, being more experienced and sophisticated, they appreciate the importance of self-imposed restraint on publicizing intelligence operations.

We Americans don't--perhaps because we feel guilty about the CIA. I don't think we have any reason to, but then I've had more chance than most of my fellow citizens to see how the Agency works.

So what do we do now? Admitting that the CIA and our top Government officials were naïve in thinking that these indirect subsidies could be indefinitely hushed up, we still should not jettison the activities they made possible--not if we care about enlarging world-wide understanding of America and what we stand for.

I believe that it's up to the Congress, which holds the purse strings, to repair the damage. You can hear plenty of patriotic cold-war oratory on Capitol Hill, but when it comes to appropriating funds needed to wage the cold war, our representatives don't always suit their actions to their words, except where military expenditures are concerned. Let's hope the recent furor will impel our elected repre-

representatives to realize that Vietnam is only one front in this war—and by no means the most important—and that being niggardly about foreign economic assistance, about USIA operations and about the kind of activities that should be handled by the State Department's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs is the most shortsighted kind of economy at this time in history.

The job the CIA has been doing covertly needs to be done overtly, perhaps by an agency with a less cloak-and-dagger-sounding title. Otherwise, we will only make it easier for our determined and unscrupulous opponents to convert and subvert a new generation of leadership in this revolutionary world.

And while we ponder how to do it, let's also hope the muckrakers get on a new tack. We've done ourselves enough damage already.

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