

JAN 1972

THE CIA AND DECISION-MAKING

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"The most fundamental method of work . . . is to determine our working policies according to the actual conditions. When we study the causes of the mistakes we have made, we find that they all arose because we departed from the actual situation . . . and were subjective in determining our working policies."—"The Thoughts of Mao Tse-tung."

IN bucolic McLean, Virginia, screened by trees and surrounded by a high fence, squats a vast expanse of concrete and glass known familiarly as the "Pickle Factory," and more formally as "Headquarters, Central Intelligence Agency." Chiselled into the marble which is the only relieving feature of the building's sterile main entrance are the words, "The Truth Shall Make You Free." The quotation from St. John was personally chosen for the new building by Allen W. Dulles over the objection of several subordinates who felt that the Agency, then still reeling from the Bay of Pigs débâcle, should adopt a somewhat less lofty motto. (In those dark days of late 1961, some suggested that a more appropriate choice would be "Look Before You Leap.") But Dulles had a deeper sense of history than most. Although he was a casualty of the Bay of Pigs and never sat in the Director's office with its view over the Potomac, he left a permanent mark not only on the Agency which he had fashioned but on its building which he had planned.

Allen Dulles was famous among many and notorious among some for his consummate skill as an intelligence operative ("spook" in current parlance), but one of his greatest contributions in nurturing the frail arrangements he helped to create to provide intelligence support to Washington's top-level foreign-policy-makers.

Harry Truman, whose Administration gave birth to both the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency, recalls that, "Each time the National Security Council is about to consider a certain policy—let us say a policy having to do with Southeast Asia—it immediately calls upon the CIA to present an estimate of the effects such a policy is likely to have. . . ." President Truman painted a somewhat more cozy relationship between the NSC and the CIA than probably existed during, and certainly since, his Administration. None the less, it is fair to say that the intelligence community, and especially the CIA, played an important advisory role in high-level policy deliberations during the 1950s and early 1960s.

To provide the most informed intelligence judgments on the effects a contemplated policy might have on American national security interests, a group especially tailored for the task was organized in 1950 within the CIA. While this step would probably have been taken sooner or later, the communist victory

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