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The Public Business

'Foresight' Of The CIA

CPYRGHT

BY DILLARD STOKES

WASHINGTON
THE RUSSIAN SPUTNIK was a raw, numbing shock to the United States and the rest of the world.

This nation had been telling one and all about its \$110 million Vanguard project, releasing cross-section drawings, showing models and photos, announcing the time tables, radio frequencies and so forth.

And with a simplicity, altogether childish, assuming that in the generous spirit of Western science, the Kremlin, too, would tell what it was doing to advance human learning.

The Russians meanwhile did nothing of the sort, but drove hard in secret toward the appalling propaganda victory they scored on October 4.

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AMERICAN statesmen and scientists were caught flat-footed, with no public statements ready in the mimeograph rooms, and no tracking devices in the observatories.

In the White House press room, the President's mouthpiece, Mr. James Hagerty,

came through gamely. Like a punch dazed heavyweight rolling into a clinch he mumbled a vague claim that the big news was no surprise to the administration.

On the face of it, that was straight hogwash, because the Soviet feat was an absolutely staggering surprise to the Navy experts directly concerned with it, and to the military committees of the House and Senate, and to no end of generals, admirals, commissioners and directors and the like—who were not as alert as Mr. Hagerty, and so made no effort to pretend otherwise.

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FOR A DOZEN YEARS, the Russians had the aid of a considerable crew of German experts, of all the data freely given out here, and of all Communist spies could steal.

And there were warnings. For instance, the late Senator McCarthy in October, 1955, put out a comprehensive analysis showing Russia half a year ahead of the United States in missile development, and asking why.

And in April, 1956, McCarthy proposed a Joint Congressional Committee with subpoena powers, to find out why guided missiles were lagging, and give the program a spur. Although the senator pleaded for "all possible haste", the gentlemen now clamoring for investigations did not share his sense of urgency, and nothing was done.

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THUS, WHILE these warnings were in general terms, Sputnik would not have been a surprise if they had been heeded.

Regardless of this, many have wondered why there was no advance notice on the practical end, from our embassies—those "listening posts"—the military services, or the many billion dollar Central Intelligence Agency.

Now comes the President's Committee on Scientists and Engineers to try to take the heat off CIA, with evidence the super spies foresaw the whole business. The evidence is that a few hours before Sputnik hit the front pages, the assistant director of CIA told the committees, "it wouldn't surprise us if such an announcement came at any time."

Yet—it did.