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CPYRGHT

Cloudy Intelligence

op-level estimates that reach the President to remain completely objective. The men who provide these judgments are appointees of the President's own Administration. Given the present centralization of intelligence activities, it is especially hard for minority views, which might happen to be right, to reach the top.

CPYRGHT

Are United States intelligence estimates being colored or distorted by policy?

The differences between President Kennedy and Senator Keating about how many Soviet troops are in Cuba could reflect a serious weakness in the elaborate apparatus the nation maintains for collecting and evaluating the data on which policy must be built.

The problem is not new to this Administration, nor did it originate with the Cuban crisis. But when intelligence becomes—as it has become today—the very cornerstone of policy, an almost superhuman objectivity is required on the part of our intelligence chiefs to avoid estimates and evaluations tailored to policy. Intelligence, if it is to be worth anything, must be completely nonpartisan.

A Senate subcommittee, which has been quietly investigating the Cuban crisis, has already found considerable evidence that the intelligence estimates of last summer and fall were keyed to the "it can't happen here" atmosphere, then prevalent in Washington. The belief of all the nation's top Soviet experts that Premier Khrushchev would never risk installing Russian missiles in Cuba appears to have influenced most of the intelligence judgments that reached the President in that period. The awakening led to a concentration on missiles only, that caused us to downgrade the significance of the small Soviet force that had been sent to Cuba.

Today, the basic differences between the President and his critics concern the size of this force, and whether it is being reduced. Both Mr. Kennedy and Senator Keating are getting their information from the same source—Government intelligence agencies. But, because Cuba has become a partisan issue, it is not easy for the

centralization of intelligence activities, it is especially hard for minority views, which might happen to be right, to reach the top.

This problem will not be helped by the appointment of Clark M. Clifford to replace Dr. James R. Killian, chairman of the board of directors of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, as chairman of the Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. The board was established as a result of a recommendation of the Hoover Commission in 1956 to monitor continuously C.I.A. and other intelligence activities.

Mr. Clifford has a brilliant mind, but, as a long-time trouble-shooter for the Democratic party, he is inextricably associated with partisan politics. He replaces a skilled and objective scientist-administrator. The selection is at best unfortunate. It is bound to give the impression that our intelligence activities will now be monitored—not by a chairman who is an expert in the field—but by one who is essentially a politician,