

Front Edit Other
Page Page

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Between the Lines

Bottleneck in U. S. Intelligence

Communism's Takeover in Cuba an Example of Failure

Washington—The gathering

of intelligence is as objective a task for professionals as is newspaper reporting. The intelligence man cannot be part of a policy-setting organization without being influenced in what he reports, any more than a reporter can be a newspaper advertiser at the same time.



Miss Roosevelt

Unfortunately, the intelligence man does not have the independence of the reporter. Policymakers in the State Department have the last say over his information. They can pass it along or spike it. The State Department, of course, is divided into geographical desks. Each has authority over everything concerning its area. The Central Intelligence Agency is subordinate to this mechanism.

The tremendous danger is that it is not the trivial, ordinary "government information" that is being held back from the Congress and top policymakers in the Executive Branch, including the President himself. The information that is blocked almost invariably concerns something of "extraordinary importance," which if objectively recognized would require a fundamental change in the course of foreign and military policy. Here is the gap. Human attitudes create a situation which facilitates the conspiratorial element.

By
EDITH KERMIT ROOSEVELT

About-Face Aspect

Take, for example, the head of a geographical desk in the State Department who has spent the last few years developing a policy on some African, South American or Middle Eastern country. How does he react when an item of intelligence comes across his desk which refutes everything that he has been saying and doing over the years?

Such an item would require, if recognized and properly evaluated, that a new approach be made. Such an about-face might reflect badly on the official's judgment. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that data which conflicts with "policy" becomes lost or buried in State Department files, somehow failing to reach the men at the top.

Actually, this could have been the case with Cuba and Castro. It has to be this, or else the only alternatives are stupidity or subversion. In all these instances, the results are the same.

Caribbean Desk

Here also lies the true significance, for example, of the Senate Internal Security subcommittee's findings concerning William A. Wieland, head of the State Department's Office of Caribbean Affairs when Castro grabbed power in Cuba. The senators said:

"To Mr. Wieland's desk came, over a period of years, great quantities of solid intelligence respecting the Communist nature and connection of the Castro movement, of

Castro himself and his principal lieutenants. The committee was unable to document a single instance in which Mr. Wieland passed any of this material up to his superiors or mentioned it as credible in any report or policy paper."

Since well-rounded, factual information is the basis for a wise and effective foreign policy, we have here the perfect formula for diversion and paralysis of policy.

Gets Top Post

The protection which foreign service officers who operate within this framework give to one another explains Wieland's recent appointment as top consular officer in Australia. It also explains the attempted firing of Olin F. Olepka, the State Department security chief, who exposed this system which has led to our blunders in China and elsewhere in the world.

A careful reading of the full text of the many reports on Cuba prepared by the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (I&R) reveals the extraordinary consistency with which intelligence was ignored, blocked or suppressed. Obviously, more than one official would have to be involved in this process.

I & R received a continuous flow of factual material documenting the Communist connections of Castro and his Communist supporters from the FBI, the Central Intelligence Agency and our embassies in Latin American countries. This is proved by the contents of a draft report prepared by I & R itself in August of 1960.

Reports on Cuba

For the first time, this draft report contained the information that in late 1957 and early 1958 the Communist Party of Cuba had captured the 26th of July Movement.

On August, 1958, reports from within the Cuban Communist Party, the I & R report revealed that the party and the rebels had reached a secret agreement guaranteeing Communist labor leaders positions in any post-revolutionary labor organization.

The I & R report admitted also that the rebels and the Communists had agreed to place Reds in key positions throughout the government through the assistance of Raul Castro, "Che" Guevara and others among Fidel Castro's principal advisers.

Obviously, this true, hard intelligence conflicted with policy so it was only sent up to the top after the damage was done and Castro was in power.

A-Bomb Decision

This bottleneck in intelligence is no new situation at the State Department. At the close of World War II, the Department failed to forward to the White House the information that the tremendous Japanese Army in Kwantung Province, Manchuria, was no longer in existence.

The belief that this great force was close to Japan, ready to strike at our invading forces, led President Truman to decide upon dropping the atom bomb and made our whole post-war policy at the end unrealistic in relation to the actual strength of Japan.

This failure to transmit intelligence data is being practiced in the Viet Nam situation, too, and it will continue to occur until the gatherer of information for the government is independent of the State Department. Then political ideology will not prevent vital information from reaching the top.