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III: The Seats of the Mighty. The Dark Councils of Power

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On Dec. 7, 1941, the United States was the only major power on earth that had no national intelligence service, and there are those who believe that the lack of one made the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor possible.

We created the Office of Strategic Services as a wartime emergency and disbanded it as soon as the war was over.

Then ... realizing that we were the leaders of the Western world ... we established the Central Intelligence Agency to meet the threat of international communism.

Fighting fire with fire, it was called. Living in the real world, it was called.

In the first administration of Dwight D. Eisenhower there was created a committee of firefighters that has had many names but is most commonly known as "The Forty Group."

Five ... sometimes six ... men named by the president from the higher echelons of his State Department and military advisers met in deepest secrecy to fight a secret war in ways that the pre-war nation would have found unacceptable.

In the early days of the nation we had sent the U.S. Cavalry. Later we had sent the Marines.

Early in the Eisenhower years we were sending the CIA.

People in the intelligence community refer to the most secret of its covert missions as "black," and the blackest of them all were those designed to overthrow governments or assassinate the heads of foreign states.

All such operations of deep blackness had to be approved by the Forty Group, and for years the late Gordon Gray served on it as President Eisenhower's representative.

This is how he came to be there ...

Gray is believed to have been introduced to President Harry Truman by Frank Wisner, a wealthy, bright and charming Mississippian who had been in the OSS in World War II.

Wisner had a great interest in and knowledge of international affairs.

He ... and lived in Win-

In a short time Gray had become secretary of the Army, had probably refused appointment as director of the CIA and had left Washington for the presidency of his alma mater in Chapel Hill.

The CIA of the Truman administration was quite different from the one we know today.

Truman had wanted a central agency for collecting and using foreign intelligence to sound an alarm before another Pearl Harbor.

There were men who wanted a bigger, stronger and more powerful CIA with the authority to "fight fire with fire," and one of these was Allen Dulles, who was the nation's most experienced and skillful spy.

Dulles was convinced ... as most of the nation was ... that Harry Truman would be beaten by Tom Dewey in 1948. Dulles' brother, John Foster, would be named secretary of state. Allen Dulles would become director of the CIA.

Dulles had a hand in shaping some of the early CIA legislation to make it the instrument he expected to have at his disposal by early 1949.

The act that created it specified certain areas of responsibility and then added a Dulles line which said the agency was also empowered to "perform such other functions and duties relating to intelligence as the National Security Council may from time to time direct."

Truman surprised almost everyone but himself by beating Dewey in '48, but Allen Dulles, a patient man, continued to shape the agency to his own liking.

In 1949, he managed to have included in new legislation a line that said "the sums made available to the Agency may be expended without regard to the provisions of law and regulations relating to the expenditure of Government funds."

By the time Dwight Eisenhower became president and named the Dulleses to their expected posts, the president of the United States had an agency tailored to his needs. If a thing could be described as being a threat to our national security, he could direct the CIA to do whatever seemed necessary to remove the threat.

And he had a blank check with which to pay the bills.

Gray, in the meantime, was president

from Presidents Truman and Eisenhower to serve them in matters usually related to national security.

In one of those ... the chairmanship of a committee named to inquire into the loyalty of J. Robert Oppenheimer, the physicist who was sometimes described as the father of the atomic bomb ... Gray did his job as he saw it and led the committee to a finding that was probably justified by the evidence:

Oppenheimer's loyalty to his country was not questioned, but he was denied further access to the nation's atomic secrets.

Oppenheimer had a broad base of support. The Gray committee was widely criticized, and as a friend of Gray said later:

"That really scalded him. He talked about it years later. He stayed out of controversy after that. He was never an activist. After the Oppenheimer thing he was always a compromiser."

(Shortly after Gray left Chapel Hill Oppenheimer was invited to speak there, and the audience gave him a 10-minute standing ovation when he was introduced.)

In Washington ...

An army backed by the CIA invaded Guatemala, overthrew the president and installed one who was more to Eisenhower's liking.

The CIA got rid of Iran's premier, Mohammed Mossadegh, and replaced him with the CIA's man, Gen. Fazollah Zahedi.

Col. Edward G. Lansdale of the CIA was sent to Saigon to organize a paramilitary force to fight North Vietnam.

The operations in Guatemala and Iran were considered successful, but the CIA was being talked about around the world, and some people at home were beginning to ask embarrassing questions.

Gen. Mark Clark headed a task force that looked into the nation's intelligence operations. It eventually recommended that a congressional "watchdog" committee be named to keep an eye on the intelligence community ... and especially the CIA.

Congress had been persuaded in the past that the CIA must be let alone for the good of the nation. Now someone was making waves, and the boat was being