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THE CHOICE IS INTELLIGENCE OR PROPAGANDA

by Julia Ferguson

INTELLIGENCE professionals were shocked recently when the House Intelligence Committee released a Left-slanted attack on U.S. policy in Central America. The Report, written by members of the staff of Intelligence Oversight and Evaluation Subcommittee Chairman Charles Rose (D.-North Carolina), was immediately condemned by other members of the Committee and the intelligence community. At the same time, the Cuban propaganda network began circulating selected excerpts of the Report as a part of its anti-U.S. campaign in Central America.

The House Intelligence Committee, chaired by Representative Edward Boland (D.-Massachusetts), had developed a substantial reputation during its five years of existence as a balanced, moderate, bipartisan congressional participant in intelligence matters. The Report by the Rose Subcommittee staff raised images of the discredited Frank Church hysteria of the Seventies. One signal of the seriousness with which the release of the Report is regarded in intelligence circles was the fact that Admiral Bobby Ray Inman, former deputy director of the C.I.A. and previously director of the National Security Agency, resigned his position as an unpaid consultant to the House Intelligence Committee. Inman, who had been appointed to the post with much fanfare by Chairman Boland, left because of the slanted nature of the Staff Report and the partisan manner in which it was released.

Leading the congressional protest is Representative C.W. "Bill" Young (R.-Florida), who called the Staff Report "extremely biased, containing overstatements, misstatements and subjective generalities." Young pointed out that a Committee Staff Report is

ment packed with assumptions, opinions, and conclusions of a political nature. Staffers are supposed to stick to assembling facts.

The Staff Report finds fault primarily with the "presentation" of U.S. intelligence information, which it contends is given to "suggestion of greater certainty than is warranted by the evidence." To justify this claim, the Report attacks a C.I.A. secret briefing on international Communist support of the Salvadoran terrorists given in March of this year. But Intelligence Committee Chairman Boland said after the briefing that the evidence was "convincing" that the Salvadoran terrorists "rely on the use of sites in Nicaragua for command and control and for logistical support." The Chairman continued by stating there was "further persuasive evidence" that the Sandinistas were helping to train the Salvadoran terrorists, transferring arms and financial support to them, and were providing them with bases of operation on Nicaraguan territory. And, said the Chairman, "Cuban involvement — especially in providing arms — is also evident."

The Rose Staff Report seeks to discredit this briefing, and by implication Chairman Boland's response, by declaring that "only a very few" ships had been traced from the Soviet Union to Cuba and Nicaragua carrying arms for the terrorists. Never mind that arms for the Communist terrorist movement are flowing from the Soviet Union through other Communist countries to Nicaragua where they are given to the terrorists of the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Movement (F.M.L.N.).

The Staff Report's second major criticism is that our intelligence places faulty "reliance on some unquestioned and sometimes contradictory assumptions." But the only "contradictory assumptions" cited are those on whether increased American pressure on the Communist Cuban regime would motivate it to "reduce tensions" or whether it would cause Fidel Castro "to step up his troublemaking activities." The Staff Report ignored the facts that the result depends on how much pressure is applied and at what point Castro decides the pleasure of exporting terrorism and subversion in this hemisphere is not worth the pain of vastly tightened economic embargoes, internal unrest encouraged by the proposed new U.S. Radio Marti broadcasts, and so forth.

The third major unfair criticism of U.S. intelligence was its alleged "acceptance of descriptions given by the Salvadoran government when intelligence analysts recognize grounds for skepticism." This boils down to the fact that the Rose Subcommittee staffers do not believe that the Government of El Salvador is attempting to maintain discipline over its troops, and that the only evidence that members of the Salvadoran armed forces involved in abuses are being punished comes from the Government of El Salvador. Never mind that the Staff Report itself cites a cable from the U.S. Embassy in San Salvador which corroborates the statements of the Salvadoran Government.

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