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HOWARD ROSENBERG

SECRET IS OUT: CIA TV SERIES PROPOSED

Is TV ready for the CIA? The CIA—condemned by many and accused of helping fell foreign governments like oak trees and meddling in the affairs of such nations as Chile and Iran—is the subject of a proposed pilot for a "fictionalized" dramatic series on CBS.

The operative word for "The CIA" is "proposed." The script hasn't even been written. It's a "script development deal," said Scott M. Siegler, CBS vice president, dramatic program development. "That means it's one of a number of scripts being considered for a pilot and a decision is probably nine months away.

However, Siegler added, "On paper, at least, it's stronger than most, and it could be a breakthrough." Twentieth-Century-Fox-TV and Thompson, Penny, Wagner Productions—which was formed for the occasion—are collaborating on "The CIA." The script will be written by former OSS officer Edward Anhalt, who won Academy Awards for his writing of "Becket" and "Panic in the Streets."

So far, so good. But anyone familiar with how "The FBI" glorified the bureau for eight seasons on ABC can be excused for snickering about something called "The CIA."

Not only that, "The CIA" would be made with the technical and "interpretive assistance" of the Association of Former Intelligence Officers (AFIO), whose 2,800 members include some 1,100 ex-CIA personnel. Co-executive producer Larry Thompson insists he's "not on some crusade to cleanse the CIA."

"Our intent," said Thompson, "is not to whitewash anything. We want to educate the American people to what the CIA does, then let them make up their own minds."

However, Siegler seemed less positive about the proposed show's politics. "Whitewash? We haven't even projected it that far," Siegler said the "time is right" for a series like "The CIA." "America's moving to the right. America will become more anti-foreign, more tolerant of the U.S. protecting its interests abroad, no matter who is president," he said.

The AFIO would have no creative control, but would critique for "authenticity" and suggest themes for stories from time to time, should "The CIA" be picked up for a series, said AFIO president Jack Blake by phone for McLean, Va. He expects "The CIA" to show the agency's warts, "but this is not to say you're going to have anything like (the

will recognize the stories," he said. It would be revolutionary, indeed, for a government-regulated TV network to deal in a weekly series, if at all, with the CIA's alleged roles in the overthrow of the Allende government in Chile and early backing of the Shah of Iran. However, Thompson won't talk about specifics.

Former CIA director William Colby once told Thompson that "the problem with the CIA was that it is so secretive that the public didn't know what it did, and when they did get information, it was in a vacuum."

Would "The CIA" show the unglamorous, unheroic seamier side of spying that hasn't been seen weekly on TV since CBS carried the British series "I Spy" some 15 years ago?

"There are good guys in the CIA and there are bad guys," said Thompson. "They may get to a point where they have to make a decision about what justifies the means. Some mistakes will be made and we will show the missions that aren't successful. But each week, if you like the characters, you'll understand they are American citizens