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Joseph Kraft

# The Politics of Assassination

Behind the daily, unceasing rati-  
on of horror stories about the Central Intel-  
ligence Agency there is working a  
many-sided politics of assassination.  
The upshot is confusion about what  
happened, innuendo damaging to per-  
sons both living and dead, and delay in  
the reform of the agency.

The wrongs already done can proba-  
bly not be righted. But at least it  
seems useful to describe the process  
that keeps the issue dragging on and  
on and on.

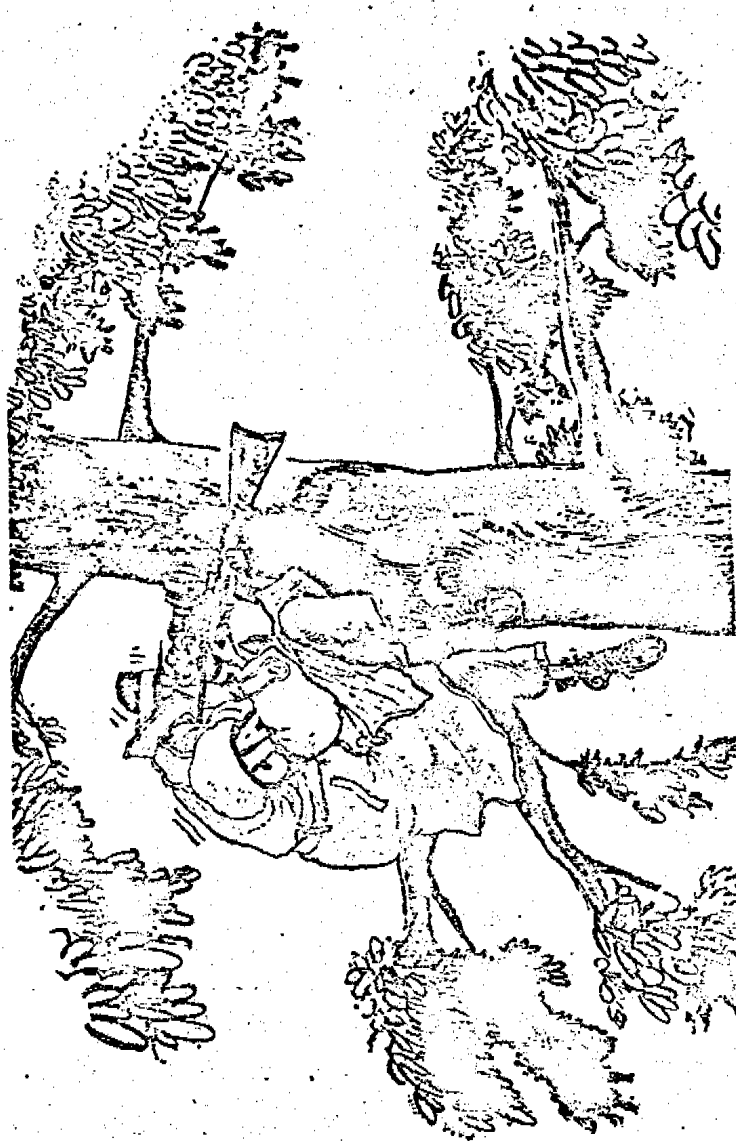
The starting point is the undoubted  
fact that officials of the CIA worked in  
deliberate fashion over long periods of  
time to promote the assassination of  
some foreign leaders. William Colby,  
the director of the CIA, has handled  
this embarrassing matter in the curi-  
ous, semi-candid fashion that has  
marked his whole approach to wrong-  
doing by the agency.

He made known the assassination  
projects—first to President Ford, then  
to the Rockefeller Commission looking  
into domestic activities by the CIA.  
Once the information became public,  
he and other CIA officials tried to  
save the honor of the agency by laying  
the blame for what had been done on  
other, higher officials.

Leading Republican figures joined  
the game. President Ford himself  
leaked the fact of the assassination  
plots to the New York Times, and then  
focused more attention on the issue  
by formally assigning it to the Rocke-  
feller Commission.

Vice President Rockefeller grati-  
tously suggested on national televi-  
sion that President John Kennedy and  
Atty. Gen. Robert Kennedy knew  
about CIA efforts to get Fidel Castro,  
Richard Schweiker of Pennsylvania, a  
leading Republican member of the  
Senate committee investigating the  
CIA, then suggested, also on national  
television, that the assassination of  
President Kennedy might have been  
an act of revenge for the conspiracies  
against Castro's life.

Democrats have made riposte to that  
thrust in two ways. First they are im-  
plying strongly that in many assassina-  
tion efforts the CIA was acting on its  
own and not in response to direction  
from above. In that vein, much to the



By Mitchell for the Richmond News Leader

The implication of some of the leaks  
is that the Secretary of State, former  
Atty. Gen. John Mitchell, and former  
CIA Director Richard Helms were  
privy to the President's order. It is  
flatly implied that Mr. Helms, who is  
now ambassador to Iran, committed  
perjury in denying knowledge of the  
attempts to undo Allende to a Senate  
committee. It is hinted that Secretary  
of State Henry Kissinger also com-  
mitted perjury.

Much of the reporting, especially by  
those humble seekers after truth in  
the networks, suggests that the full  
story can finally be known if only the  
probe goes deeper—if President Nixon  
talks, or Dr. Kissinger, or Mr. Mitchell.  
Hence there is a well-established ra-  
tionale for continued investigating and  
continued leaking.

My own impression, and that of

displeasure of some members, Sen.  
Frank Church, the chairman of the  
Senate committee, declared that the  
CIA had behaved like a "rogue ele-  
phant."

Secondly, the committee is includ-  
ing, under the rubric of a general in-  
vestigation into assassinations, a look  
at several plots undertaken in 1970  
against Salvador Allende, then Presi-  
dent elect of Chile. Dr. Allende,  
a Marxist, was himself killed in a mili-  
tary coup in 1973. The 1970 plots  
against him resulted in the accidental  
killing of Gen. Rene Schneider, then  
chief of the staff of the Chilean Army.

Leaks from the committee purport  
to show that the 1970 plots had CIA  
support. The leaks further suggest that  
President Nixon, in a burst of frustra-  
tion, personally ordered CIA participa-  
tion in those plots.

some acute members of the Senate  
committee is that the investigation  
can only yield a murky picture. The  
CIA apparently undertook some hor-  
rors on its own bat, and some orders.  
For the rest there was an unclear line  
of command, an ambiguous account-  
ability.

Which only underlines the need to  
reorganize the intelligence community  
and to make changes at the top in or-  
der to prevent further abuses. It is sad  
that the Senate committee has allowed  
itself to be drawn from its original  
mandate by the diversion of assassina-  
tion politics. It is time that President  
Ford, who bears no small responsibil-  
ity for having created the diversion,  
stepped in to give shape and direction  
to the inquiry.

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Jack Anderson

Mr. Ford A Part of the People

## Arms Deals: The President vs. the Congress

**C**ONFLICT WITH CONGRESS over sending arms to foreign states has become the central problem of the Ford administration's foreign policy. It arises from all of the strains of the last few years—indeed, of the last generation—which have weakened not only this President but the presidency in matters of international affairs. Typically, the administration tries to sell or grant military aid to fulfill a "commitment," stabilize or strengthen a client, or otherwise serve a larger strategic or diplomatic purpose. And the Congress, either not sharing that purpose or not perceiving it, resists.

More pointedly, Mr. Ford has been striving, however erratically, to close down the principal local conflicts around the world—a limited aim in comparison to the grand aspirations of an earlier period but an entirely appropriate and worthy one. To this end, he has sought by arms transfers to conciliate or strengthen, for purposes of bargaining, states ranging from South Vietnam to Turkey to Jordan. In each case Congress has responded less to his larger eventual purpose than to the smaller immediate spectacle of military aid flowing to a suspect client. That is the nub of the problem. Congress refuses to accept, as any President must, the responsibility for creating and executing an overall diplomatic plan. But it reserves for itself a right to torpedo whole enterprises by vetoing particular steps taken to put them into effect.

Some may be tempted to hope that the problem will somehow go away. But the spirit of the day crushes that hope. Legislation giving Congress an effective and timely opportunity to overrule executive military supply decisions, in respect to sales as well as grants, is now on the books and is in regular use. We are not speaking here of whether the President or the Congress is "right" in any one of the specific current issues. We are concerned, rather, with the effectiveness of the general approach to these issues.

The President now approaches each arms deal one by one and asks Congress to give him what he says he needs. But this is misguided. Mr. Ford should be trying to clarify the overall relationship between himself and the Congress in foreign affairs. He has every right and reason to solicit understanding for the proposition that his is the responsibility to actually conduct policy, to blend the parts of it that are public with the parts that are necessarily confidential, to balance competing claims and objectives that can be seen as a whole only from the Oval Office. He has every right to expect that the Congress will not keep spoiling his strategies with crippling attacks on their specific ingredients. Congress, which so often reacts emotionally and politically on the basis of limited information and partisan insight, is wide open to attack on this score.

This is the point in the argument where the administration customarily closes its briefcase. But it can't. For Mr. Ford, like others in the White House before

him, has yet to see that to gain the flexibility and initiative a President must have, he must pay something. He must, in brief, gain congressional consent for his broad policy, and this he can do, if at all, only by dealing openly and honestly with the Hill in a way that his administration has only talked of so far. If he fails to consult early, he loses much of his standing to complain later.

Let us put aside the record on Vietnam and just consider Turkey: No one who has studied the record disputes that by closer attention last year—admittedly a difficult time in Washington, but politics is unforgiving—the Nixon-Ford administration might have averted the disaster on Cyprus, which preceded the crisis exploding now in Turkey. It remains uncertain whether this situation is redeemable. But it is beyond cavil that the deterioration would never have progressed so far if the administration had been readier to acknowledge its lapses and if it had evinced more concern for the fate, unimproved since, of Cyprus. Surely that would have narrowed the breach with Capitol Hill which, as it widened, produced the current debacle of U.S. policy in Turkey.

Or consider Jordan: Mr. Ford is making a bold and enlightened effort to achieve a Mideast settlement. It involves heavy pressure on Israel, as well as immense assistance of various sorts to Israel; regarding Jordan, it involves helping King Hussein achieve the stature he needs vis-a-vis his army and his fellow Arabs to become an effective partner in the search for peace with particular respect to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Whether three or six or 14 or 22 Hawk batteries should be sold to him is obviously arguable. But it should also be obvious that Congress on its own is simply not equipped to make such a fine decision. For his part, if Mr. Ford is to have the freedom to make it himself, he must persuade Congress that his broad purpose is correct.

For instance, he cannot conduct a charade of "re-assessment," declaring that all new Mideast arms deals are suspended, and then make with Jordan an exceptionally important deal on which its very participation in another war could hinge. He cannot fail to consult Congress at the moment when no large diplomatic chips have been played and then, after playing the chips alone, threaten Congress with the blame if the hand is lost. He cannot pretend there is no risk for Israel: He must concede that there is a risk of one sort, and then explain why that risk is worth taking.

In sum, until the President is prepared to meet with Congress on its terms, he can be sure the Congress will not meet him on his. And while that is the case, arms decisions and other major foreign policy issues will remain fields of political combat, with all the attendant risks and costs, instead of yielding to a reasonable consensus as they must if the President's worthy purposes are to be realized.