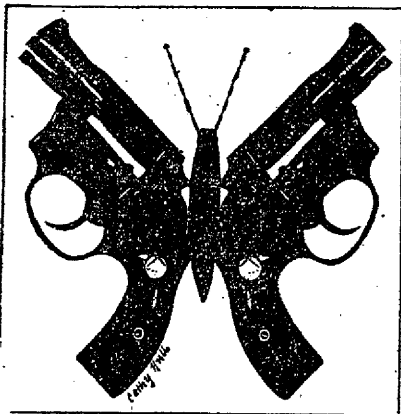


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Senate Details, Deplores C.I.A.'s Murder Plots



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As with the aberrant conduct in office of Richard M. Nixon, the Government has again made a rigid accounting of its own misdeeds and published it to the world. The Senate committee investigating America's intelligence services has issued a report describing the involvement of Government officials in plots by the Central Intelligence Agency to assassinate the leaders of other nations.

Most of the important information in the report was already public knowledge, but through news reports and unofficial accounts. The Senate's report put the imprimatur of an official Government body on 347 pages of dispassionately related details, many of them never public before and all of them serving to provide an apparently unchallengeable solidity to the findings.

The report was adopted unanimously by the committee members, who range in philosophy from conservative Republicans to liberal Democrats. Since the document was issued, neither its accuracy nor its fairness has been challenged. What the report says, in brief summary, is this:

- That under Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson, at least, assassination of foreign leaders was deliberate American policy, and "ranking Government officials discussed, and may have authorized, the establishment within the C.I.A. of a generalized assassination capability."

Whether the broad capacity for such murders, or specific plots, were directly approved or ordered by a President is not clearly demonstrable, the report said, primarily because it was the deliberate policy to obfuscate intention by the use of circumlocution and euphemisms when murder was discussed.

But the Senators made it quite clear they were not concluding that the

Presidents were without knowledge of the assassination plots. And they said the Presidents were in any case responsible because "they should have known . . ."

- The Central Intelligence Agency was involved in plots against five leaders in foreign countries: Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba, Patrice Lumumba of the Congo (now Zaire), Rafael Trujillo of the Dominican Republic, General René Schneider of Chile, and President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam.

The committee concluded that the plots against Castro and Lumumba originated in the United States, and that in the other instances the United States became embroiled in plots hatched abroad. All the leaders except Castro did die violently, but the committee did not find the intelligence agency implicated directly in the deaths.

There was also evidence, not developed at length, that the C.I.A. had been involved in plans to murder President Sukarno of Indonesia and "Papa Doc" Duvalier of Haiti.

- Several officials of the C.I.A. insist they acted within the intentions of the policies adopted by their superiors in the White House, and the committee agreed there was insufficient precision in policy directives. But the report concludes it was "reprehensible" for C.I.A. officials not to inform their superiors clearly and unambiguously about murder plots and actions, and that the agents' recent explanations are "unacceptable."

- A number of specific examples of high-level passivity and the deliberate ambiguity of official communication are given. One involved President Kennedy who, though aware of the plotting of Dominicans against the dictator Trujillo, and of C.I.A. involvement with the plotters, nevertheless sent a cable the day before the murder expressing his opposition to assassination "as a matter of general policy."

When Attorney General Robert Kennedy, according to the testimony of C.I.A. officials, was told about efforts to murder Fidel Castro, Mr. Kennedy objected to the lack of prior consultation, not to the plans for assassination.

Whether or not past presidents intended to approve assassinations, the committee urged, primarily on moral grounds, that it be legally foresworn as an instrument of foreign policy.

The argument has been made that it is really no more immoral to plot to assassinate an individual leader in peacetime than to plot to annihilate a whole population with nuclear weapons in war. The committee argued that assassination violates strongly held American values of fair play.

The committee may also have had more practical reasons in mind. For one thing, indulging in assassination could change the current rules of the game, inviting retaliation in kind.

The publication of the report was the culmination of a complex series of maneuvers by President Ford and Congress. The President had the Rockefeller Commission investigate the C.I.A., but then declined to release the commission's findings on assassinations because, he said, the data was incomplete and the investigation more appropriately belonged to the Senate committee.

Mr. Ford belatedly reversed himself, urging in recent days that the Senate report be kept secret. When the issue was put to the full Senate last week, the Democrats in control refused to allow a vote; the report was therefore issued upon the authority of the committee alone.