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Intelligence Test

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Washington.

Rep. Dante B. Fascell (D-Fla.) says that the House Foreign Affairs subcommittee which he heads will "soon" hold hearings on the report released last week by the three-man panel appointed by President Johnson to investigate the CIA's secret subsidies of students.

Since Congressman Fascell has already publicly blessed the report, the supposition is that the subcommittee will be called on to confirm his advance verdict that the panel took "a most realistic position."

It is just possible, however, that the students who were involved in these hidden million-dollar expenditures might have a more "realistic" as well as more knowledgeable grasp of the situation than the Congressman. It is certainly worth noting, in any case, that 60 former officers and staff members of the National Students Assn. charge that the report is a "poor substitute" for a full disclosure of the CIA's subsidies to the NSA and similar groups.

The Johnson panel recommended terminating the covert student operations, and suggested some other means might be found to carry them on openly. "We believe," the student leaders said, "that the public has a right to know more than the report has told." They want a thorough investigation, conducted in public either by Congress or a panel of citizens.

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They are not likely to get their wish, for a "thorough" investigation would almost certainly go beyond the student matter and get into areas of truly vital importance, such as:

Considering proposals to remove "black" operations from CIA management, and confine the agency to its original role of gathering and evaluating worldwide intelligence;

Determining whether the agency should be allowed to continue making policy, as well as carrying it out.

There has never been a director of the CIA who hasn't expressly denied that the agency

"made" or decisively shaped policy. This does not square, however, with the authoritative view of Harry S. Truman, the man who created the agency shortly after World War II.

"For some time I have been disturbed," the former President said in 1963, "by the way CIA has been diverted from its original assignment. It has become an operational and at times a policy-making arm of the government."

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Truman's doubts are now impressively confirmed by Roger Hilsman, who served under both Kennedy and Johnson as director of the State Dept.'s Bureau of Intelligence and Research, and later as Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs. In the first post he was the department's chief liaison with the CIA.

There could hardly be a better informed witness to the dominant role that intelligence has played in the last few years; and, in an absorbing book to be published later this spring, Hilsman brilliantly illuminates some of the obscurities of recent foreign policy.

"The basic trouble," says Hilsman, "was that the agency was simply too powerful for the narrow function for which it is responsible. It combined in one organization just too many of the resources and instruments of foreign policy . . ."

Ideally, he thinks, the best solution "was probably along the lines the British had followed—which kept the research and analysis functions in an organization separate from the secret intelligence-gathering functions, and subordinated the latter very sharply to the Foreign Office."

But, as Hilsman points out, "such a drastic move would require legislation," and that, he fears, "would clearly be impossible in the face of CIA's natural strength with the coalition of Southern Democrats and conservative Republicans that dominates Congress."

There is little doubt that the hearing promised by Congressman Fascell of Florida will soon make Hilsman look like a prophet.