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End of the CIA Era

WASHINGTON — The more the flap over the exposure of Central Intelligence Agency connections with student and



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labor organizations grows, the more apparent it becomes that we are at the end of an era.

Twenty years of effort have suddenly gone up in smoke, and with the collapse of a lot of hopes we might as well sing a requiem for the assumptions on which they were based.

The fundamental assumption behind the CIA was that Americans could keep secrets when they were enlisted in psychological warfare and related intelligence projects.

True enough, we had been warned ages ago, by Charles A. Beard and Felix Morley, among others, that a democracy was not exactly set up to play the politics of secrecy.

One of the main points of the old isolationists was that innocence and idealism must both be sacrificed if one is contending for world power with corrupt nations that maintain official secret acts and play the

game of subversion without qualms.

But after World War II there seemed to be no choice; the ballistic missile and the jet plane had doomed isolationism as a possible rational choice for any country with a super-power economy. (Only the De Gaulles of this world can disengage.)

We had to defend ourselves against totalitarian communism in the Cold War period and, since we were a democracy, we had to trust Americans to know their enemy and to take part in hush-hush projects to negate the activities of that enemy.

The difficulty of maintaining the stance of the past 20 years has all of a sudden proved too much for a generation that has argued itself into thinking that peace can be had through propitiation. Or that there is no danger of attack anyway. I, personally, am sure that this generation is kidding itself. But to argue the point is like throwing pellets into a hurricane.

Anarchy is the new mode, oddly tied up with a feeling that, while one should not trust big brother to draft an army or to carry out psychological warfare projects, one can and should trust that same big brother to provide free doctors, free education, and even free food and housing.

The permissive generation wants state welfare, but does not want to think about maintaining its welfare state in a world of possible predators.

The point has been made that the CIA, in subsidizing people who, after all, have not been convinced that communism can not be propitiated or ignored, has done its own part in creat-

ing the climate that has undermined 20 years of hard work.

A secondary point is that it had no business supporting domestic groups. There may be truth to these charges. But knowing that "the agency"—meaning the CIA—has been paying the bills and recruiting the personnel to carry on anti-Communist activities, many hard-liners have sat back and waited for Washington to do their work for them.

This columnist got a little insight into this aspect of the situation a couple of years ago when he was asked to go on a committee to defend South Vietnam against Communist takeover. He sat in on a number of meetings and heard many brave words spoken. But nothing came of it all. It soon became obvious that other groups, with "agency" connections, were in the field, and when these groups proved more pliable, support mysteriously flowed to them. The pliable groups presumably could be counted on to raise or lower the intensity of their anticommunism at government direction. They were "safer," politically speaking.

But now, after the recent disclosures, the "safe" anti-Communist groups that had CIA support are suddenly worthless. In the general state of apathy, anarchy and Cold War weariness, this could mean the end of all effective anticommunism. On the other hand, if there is any will left, it could be a signal for anti-Communists to start over again, without depending on the government to do propaganda and organization jobs for them.

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