

# Senate Guilt on CIA

## Why Did It Bury Chile Documents?

By Warren W. Unna

Page 1  
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**M**OST OF THE DEBATE on the court proceeding involving CIA Director Richard Helms has focused on whether he received too little punishment. Much less attention has been paid to whether it was a matter of his misleading the Senate — which he certainly did — or of the Senate refusing to be "led."

I happen to give substance to the latter because I tried to lead the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in the related matter of the International Telephone & Telegraph Corp.-CIA campaign against the late Chilean President Salvador Allende, and the committee hardly budged.

In the third week of September, 1970, I brought the committee a briefcase full of 27 secret inter-office ITT documents along with authenticating testimony. I brought the documents to the committee because, while they were obviously explosive, I could not publish them myself without compromising their source. Yet it was not until March, 1973 — 2½ years later — that the committee found occasion to hold hearings and probe into the matter.

The secret ITT correspondence handed the committee was one-sided in the sense that it was ITT writing to itself about its own actions. But it specifically detailed approaches to high CIA officials with ITT offers to make available ITT funds to help CIA mount an anti-Allende operation.

See SENATE, Page C2

By Tom Kihl for The Washington Post



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## SENATE, From Page C1

Nowhere was there any indication that the CIA officials were about to accept ITT's money. But neither was there any indication that CIA rebuked the ITT officials for overstepping themselves with such a solicitation.

ITT feared that if leftist Allende came to power he would nationalize the firm's valuable Chilean holdings.

The Senate committee received the ITT correspondence at a crucial period in that third week of September, 1970.

Allende, despite now disclosed CIA-funded operations already under way, had managed to win a plurality on Sept. 4. According to the Justice Department statement of facts released during the Helms proceedings, President Nixon, on Sept. 15, then had directed his CIA chief to "prevent Allende from coming to power or to unseat him." It was not until just a month after the Foreign Relations Committee was handed the correspondence, on Oct. 24, that Allende actually won his run-off election and was able to assume office as Chile's president.

**W**HAT DID the committee do with its inside knowledge after obtaining the ITT papers?

Sen. J. William Fulbright (D-Ark.), then committee chairman, phoned Helms and inquired if any hanky-panky might be going on. Such a call, from such a figure, at such a time should certainly have put Helms on notice to be more careful.

"Now, of course, it is known that the CIA operation against Allende not only was under way before his election; but continued through spring, 1973, when Helms' testimony before the committee became the cause for the recent court action against him. Helms then deliberately misled the committee by denying any Nixon administration-CIA operation against Allende.

But the lack of inquiry and follow-through in September, 1970, was not the only case of inaction by the Foreign Relations Committee. Nearly 18 months later, in February, 1972, I reminded the committee that it had all these ITT papers stacked up somewhere in its filing cabinets. This was the time when ITT's Washington lobbyist, Dita Beard, became a cause celebre for her behind-the-scenes role with the Nixon administration in an ITT antitrust case. But even with the name "ITT" emblazoned on the front pages daily, the committee did not think of its own ITT papers.

The ITT correspondence on Chile then finally was exhumed. It found its way to columnist Jack Anderson, who published it in March, 1972. ITT's solicitation of CIA help in opposing Allende then at last became public.

It was only after the Anderson publicity that the Foreign Relations Committee began showing some real curiosity as to what ITT and CIA might have been up to in Chile. Pat Holt, then the committee's Latin American expert and later its chief of staff, was sent to Santiago in December, 1972, and the committee hearing on the matter took place the following March, a full year after the Anderson exposure.

**I**N AN INTERVIEW the other day, Fulbright, now a Washington lawyer, said his committee was preoccupied with Vietnam at the time, to the exclusion of every-

thing else. Moreover, dealing with the CIA presented endless frustrations.

"I would try and get rebuffed. CIA just took the position that they weren't supposed to talk to us, and neither the committee nor I was disposed to go to court and get a subpoena. The Senate wouldn't have supported it anyway," Fulbright declared. He said that, in the three years since he left the Senate, he has been so out of touch he hasn't even been on the floor. But he assumes there is a somewhat different attitude toward inquiring since Watergate.

Former committee staffer Holt, recently retired, now acknowledges that Foreign Relations didn't pursue the CIA operation against Allende "very vigorously." Now, he thinks, the committee is "generally on the side of really wanting to know and expecting straight answers."

Senate disinclination to probe CIA has a long history. Two decades ago, former Majority Leader Mike Mansfield, a Foreign Relations member who then was a brash freshman, tried to get the Senate to approve his bill for a CIA watchdog committee. He thought he had the votes. Then, one by one, the senators came by his desk on the floor to beg off. Only later did Mansfield realize that the then CIA Director, Allen Dulles, was in the cloakroom lobbying. And the senators were only too easily persuaded.

Former Sen. Leverett Saltonstall (R-Mass.), a member of the select quintet of senators then privileged to hear what CIA chose to tell them, said, in opposition to the Mansfield bill: "The difficulty in connection with asking questions and obtaining information is that we might obtain information which I personally would rather not hear . . ."

There has been a long pattern of senators preferring the cover of deniability, lest they find themselves probing too far and knowing too much — and then being held to account when a CIA operation boomerangs.

**C**OULD THE Foreign Relations Committee's reluctance to act of seven years ago be repeated today?

Since May, 1976, there has been a Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, headed not by a gentlemanly Boston Brahmin like Saltonstall but by a feisty war veteran from Hawaii, Sen. Daniel Inouye.

Inouye is upbeat: "There always is a possibility that anything can come again, but the likelihood now is much less than in the early '70s. For one thing, the Intelligence Committee is assigned the one function of intelligence; Foreign Relations covers a wide area. For another, the intelligence community and the White House have both been very cooperative, even volunteering and initiating matters with us.

"Moreover, we have an authorization bill, a very, very sensitive document, with line items for approval. There is one copy, but any member of the Senate can see it. We now are being notified before an operation begins, instead of after the fact. If we did not react on the Hussein matter [the disclosure that Jordan's King Hussein has been receiving a secret U.S. stipend], you can assume we knew about it and did not object to it."

Inouye soon will be retiring as Intelligence Committee chairman, because the committee's guidelines spell out that the chairmanship should be rotated periodically to keep the committee from becoming a part of the intelligence community.

Another member of the Intelligence Committee, Sen. Charles Mathias (D-Md.), also expressed optimism in an interview last week: "Before, when the chairman of the Armed Services and Appropriations committees got information, that was it. Dick Russell (the late senator from Georgia who was for years chairman of Armed Services and a power on Appropriations) would say it was his job to hold such information from the rest of the Senate and the public at large. It was a conscientious view. But today that won't wash. There is no such excuse available now for the Intelligence Committee. If the committee was seized of the knowledge, then it is there to act. And just because we don't act doesn't mean we haven't reviewed. We have the responsibility. We are hired to take the heat."

Former Foreign Relations Chairman Fulbright volunteered the thought, in today's aftermath, that if Helms, a career civil servant, were merely following the orders of the White House's Forty Committee in his CIA operations against Allende, why should he alone be held responsible for hiding this matter from the Senate.

Former Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, who headed the Forty Committee at the time, told a University of Texas symposium last week that Helms had "acted correctly." Kissinger continued: "When Mr. Helms testified in 1973 in open session he answered evasively, which was what every director of the Central Intelligence Agency had always done with the full knowledge of the President and [congressional oversight] committees with regard to these sensitive subjects."

Helms himself, after pleading *nolo contendere* and

being given a two-year suspended jail sentence and fined \$2,000 by Federal District Judge Barrington Parker, had a different suggestion. He said he hoped his experience might at least lead to new guidelines for CIA directors before legislative inquiries.

**I**F THE HELMS case has a lesson for the future, it probably is, as President Carter and Attorney General Griffin Bell indicated, that executive branch witnesses hereafter will be more mindful that the Congress has both a right and an obligation to legislative oversight of executive branch operations.

But what about the lesson for the Congress? Obviously, a newly constituted Senate Select Committee on Intelligence is going to be optimistic about its new charter and its capacity to meet its watchdog obligation. And it has indeed taken some precautions to keep itself watchful.

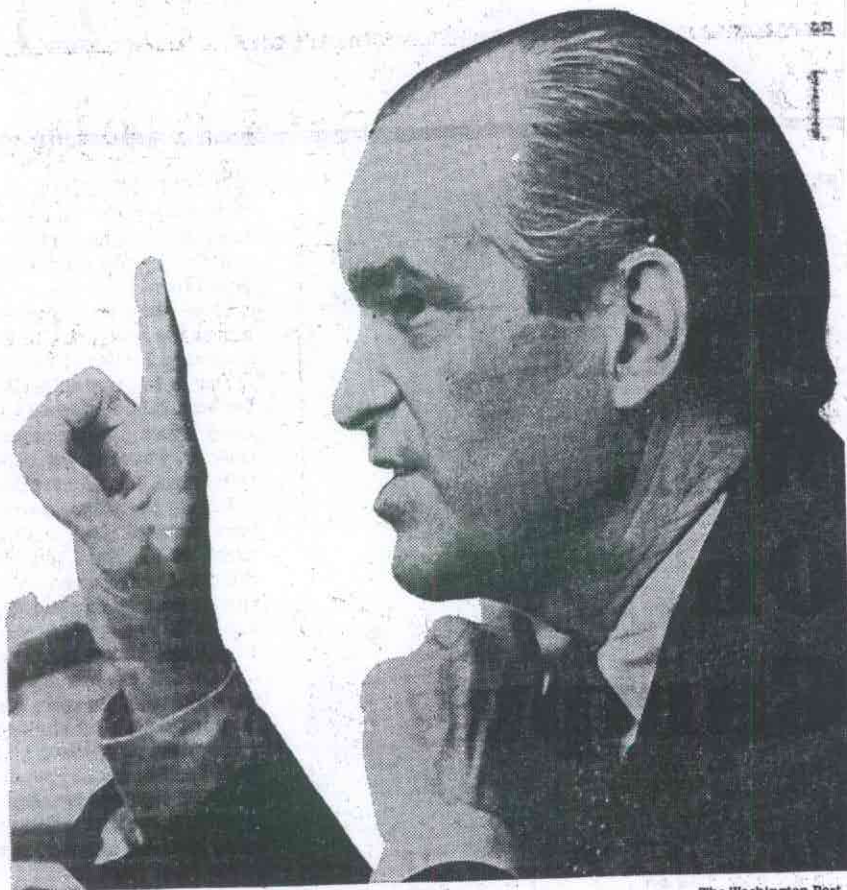
But committee membership will change and the lessons of the past will pale as reminders. In addition, every new administration, by instinct, will think it knows best and will encourage as little interference as possible in operations it decides are necessary. It may be volunteering CIA operations at the initiation stage today, but what about tomorrow?

And then there is the overall Club of 100. Will the always preoccupied senators really want to take heed from their experience with Helms, ITT and Chile and really want to abandon their traditional cover of deniability by probing, and knowing, and acting?



By James K. W. Atherton — The Washington Post  
**J. WILLIAM FURBRIGHT: "CIA just took the position that they weren't supposed to talk to us . . . ."**

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