

Institutional Dirty Tricks

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By Jeremy J. Stone

WASHINGTON — Most people believe that the function of the Central Intelligence Agency is to collect intelligence. In fact, however, as many as one-third of its 18,000 employees are occupied with political operations. The Bay of Pigs, the Iranian and Guatemalan coups, the effort to overthrow the Albanian Government in 1949, the secret war in Laos and other lesser known operations have been run by the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Plans.

It is hard to argue that the overthrow of a foreign government is "related to intelligence" or an activity done for the "benefit of the existing intelligence agencies." The courts may some day just throw out C.I.A.'s Directorate of Plans.

There are evidently a series of secret directives approved by the National Security Council in 1948 and thereafter authorizing such special operations of all kinds provided they were secret and small enough to be plausibly deniable by the Government. But even this authority is periodically exceeded because many of the operations are too big to hide, much less to deny when they fail.

C.I.A.'s operations are certainly having an unfortunate effect on American political life. The Watergate trial is an example of the problems that result when C.I.A. graduates enter political life with skills and hardened attitudes to which American society is unexpectedly vulnerable. But there are

other examples. Not long ago, the C.I.A. brought suit against Victor Marchetti, a former employe, to prevent him from disclosing—evidently in a work of fiction — facts about C.I.A. clandestine operations. The court order demanded that he submit his work to C.I.A. for clearance. This is prior restraint of publication, a most dangerous precedent against freedom of the press.

Even as an instrument of national policy narrowly conceived, C.I.A.'s Directorate of Plans may be a net liability. C.I.A. advocates press upon Presidents plans which they feel obliged to approve: the Bay of Pigs was an example. Agents engaged in these operations in the field are notoriously hard to control and, inevitably, they give off political signals which may or may not be authorized — one rarely knows.

One of the most famous of the C.I.A. political operations resulted in the infiltration of the National Student Association and about 250 other American domestic groups. The C.I.A. official who sold the whole program to Allen Dulles, and set it in motion, was Thomas W. Braden. On Jan. 6, in a syndicated column he now writes, Mr. Braden called for a C.I.A. housecleaning and noted: "The times have changed and, in some ways, they now more nearly approximate the time when the C.I.A. was born. The need then was for intelligence only." He felt the purchasing of loyalty had lasted longer than the necessity for it. This view, when expressed by Mr. Braden, makes one wonder if there continues to be a na-

tional consensus in support of this ongoing bureaucracy—the Directorate of Plans.

Much about the C.I.A. has had a distorting effect upon American democracy. Congressional oversight has been close to nonexistent: even the membership is secret of one such Congressional committee. The unprecedented, and quite unnecessary, secrecy about the C.I.A.'s over-all budget has led to burying the agency's budget in the accounts of other budgets; this violates Article I, Section 9, Clause 7 of the Constitution, under which "a regular statement and account" of Government expenditures is to be published from time to time.

But most important, the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Plans is designed to do things which the American democratic system might well not approve, things which it cannot discuss, things which the Government is afraid or ashamed to have known. Such things should only be done as a last resort, as an alternative to overt military action in a situation that presents a direct threat to U.S. security. We ought not institutionalize "dirty tricks."

The C.I.A. has a new director in James Schlesinger, and the time to re-examine these issues is clearly upon us. Shall we have an agency designed to interfere in the internal affairs of other countries for another quarter-century? Or shall we return to a foreign policy which the public and the Congress can debate, monitor and control?

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