

Part
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Should Missionaries Be Spies?

While Congress debates a new charter for the Central Intelligence Agency, missionaries around the world hold their breath. I would like to suggest reasons why foreign missionaries should not be spies.

From 1960 to 1972 I did missionary work in Tanzania. We were 150 Maryknollers serving farm people of 14 tribes. We built schools, clinics and churches, started farm coops, dug wells, taught and led prayer services. The people wanted progress, but so often leaders had deceived and cheated them that they were suspicious and distrustful, and very careful with strangers. We won their trust and were able to persuade them to invest time, labor and money in projects they could hardly understand, like a well with a hand pump.

In the 1960s, Tanzania had its share of rumors. Many times people questioned me, "Father, does America want to conquer our country? Are missionaries spies?" At that time I could honestly say, "No." But in 1976, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence issued a report that declared the CIA had used 21 missionaries and religious persons for

intelligence work. Now I wonder whether I deceived my African friends. Those 21 missionaries betrayed me, their churches and the Third Worlders they professed to serve.

I believe Congress will make a serious mistake if it permits the use of missionaries for intelligence. Yes, church people would make the CIA more effective. Grass-roots people trust them and give information that could help foreign policy makers. But America will do better to respect the integrity of its 35,000 missionaries. The war against communism is a war for minds and hearts. American missionaries are ambassadors who win for the United States the respect of millions of Third Worlders. They bring education and medicine and progress. They speak the truth and are beloved by peoples of many nations. Why should Congress allow the CIA to jeopardize one of America's strongest foreign policy assets? Why win the intelligence battle and lose the allegiance war?

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