

Cherne Unit Not Tied to C.I.A. Fund

2/21/76

By JOHN M. CREWDSON
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 20—Frank Weil, president of the Manhattan-based Norman Foundation, said today that he erred in his assertion yesterday that the Central Intelligence Agency had passed about \$15,000 through his organization to the International Rescue Committee in the mid-1960's. Mr. Weil said in a telephone interview that on checking the foundation's records, he had discovered that none of the \$27,000 it gave to the I.R.C. from 1961 to 1965 had been provided by the intelligence agency.

He said that the \$50,000 in C.I.A. funds passed through the foundation in that period had gone instead to four other organizations—the American Society of African Culture, the African-American Institute, the Pan American Foundation and the International Development Foundation.

Leo Cherne, one of President Ford's three appointees to a new intelligence oversight board set up to check for possible abuses of authority by the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies, is board chairman of the I.R.C.

Mr. Cherne, a professional economist, said the I.R.C.'s work involves assistance to political refugees round the world. The I.R.C. project funded the Norman Foundation was

a medical-service unit set up in the Belgian Congo to aid Angolan refugees and others.

Mr. Weil said today that he "misrecalled" himself yesterday in recollecting that "a mysterious gentleman" from the C.I.A. had approached him in 1963 or 1964 with a specific request to pass agency money to the Congo medical project. He said he had also erred in recalling that the foundation had agreed to serve as a pass-through for the funds only after deciding that the I.R.C. project would have been worthy of a contribution from its own endowment.

'I Was Wrong'

"Let me make it very clear," he said in the interview, "I made a mistake. I was wrong."

Although he spoke to Mr. Cherne last night and again this morning, he said, Mr. Cherne "did not ask me to do anything" with respect to setting the record straight. He is amending his earlier statements because "harm has been done," he emphasized.

Mr. cherne was appointed in 1973 to sit on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, which The New York Times reported erroneously today was abolished by Mr. Ford this week. It was the United States Intelligence Board that was abolished by executive order on Wednesday.

The President's Intelligence

Board, created by President Eisenhower in 1956, is a group of private citizens responsible for reviewing the functions of the Federal intelligence community and reporting to the President on the conduct of those agencies.

The United States Intelligence Board was a high-level coordinating group within the intelligence community, presided over by the director of Central Intelligence. In the past it met as often as each week to coordinate intelligence data available from all members of the community.

In a related development Freedom House, an organization with which Mr. Cherne has also been closely associated for many years, asked George Bush, director of Central Intelligence, whether the C.I.A. had ever given it funds "directly or through any other entity."

The request was in a letter sent to Mr. Bush that mentioned a report, also in today's Times, that Freedom House received \$3,500 from the J. M. Kaplan Fund between 1962 and 1964.

The Times article quoted executives of the Kaplan Fund as having said that while they had passed C.I.A. money to the now-defunct Institute for International Labor Research, all the funds paid by them to Freedom House or to the I.R.C. had been their own.