

By Art Buchwald

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Capitol Punishment

Call It Intelligence

I have good news today. The CIA is going to come back into all our lives. If President Reagan's executive order goes through, the agency can once again spy on Americans in this country.

There are a few people in America who are nervous about giving the Central Intelligence Agency this kind of power, so I will put their fears to rest by answering some of the questions being raised by the new ground rules.

Q: If you allow the CIA to operate in this country, don't you violate our civil liberties?

A: No, the CIA protects them. The more it knows what Americans are up to, the safer we all will be from the Commies.

Q: Will the CIA agents be able to read our mail and tap our telephones?

A: Within reason. But they are only going to read the mail and tap the phones of those people who deserve it. The rest of us have nothing to fear.

Q: The CIA was used as a political instrument by the Nixon people. What's to prevent them being used again to "get" the administration's opponents?

A: The difference is that the man under Nixon lost their moral compass. But the people who work for Ronald Reagan are beyond reproach.

Q: How do we know this?

A: Because most of them are lawyers.

Q: Doesn't the CIA have enough to do gathering intelligence abroad without bugging Americans?

A: You would think so, but most intelligence organizations know that if they can operate in their own country, they can justify a much larger budget.

Q: Will the CIA be able to break into your home under the new guidelines?

A: Not legally. But no one is going to make a big deal of it if an agency does so without getting an official okay.

Q: What's the worst that could happen to a CIA person who oversteps his authority?

A: He would be asked to resign, and then get a job working for Col. Gaddafi.

Q: I thought the FBI was in charge of catching spies in the United States. Why is the CIA getting into the act?

A: Because there are a lot of bag jobs FBI agents are no longer permitted to do. Since the CIA is not interested in prosecuting anyone, they can justify almost anything in the name of national security.

Q: What's to prevent the CIA from working with the Mafia or hir-

ing Cuban gangsters to do their dirty work for them?

A: Nothing, really. When you're doing a covert job, you want the best people you can get.

Q: Isn't there a chance that the CIA will start off their domestic spying with the best of intentions, but as they get more and more power, they could turn the country into a police state?

A: It couldn't happen. The CIA is monitored by a Senate Watchdog Committee, and nobody in the CIA would ever lie to a United States senator.

Q: Will the press be allowed to report on what the CIA is up to in this country?

A: Not if Congress passes its new American Official Secrets Act. You can't have a first-class domestic intelligence operation if the media are going to write about it.

Q: Then who protects us from our own Secret Service?

A: That's like asking who protects Soviet citizens from the KGB?