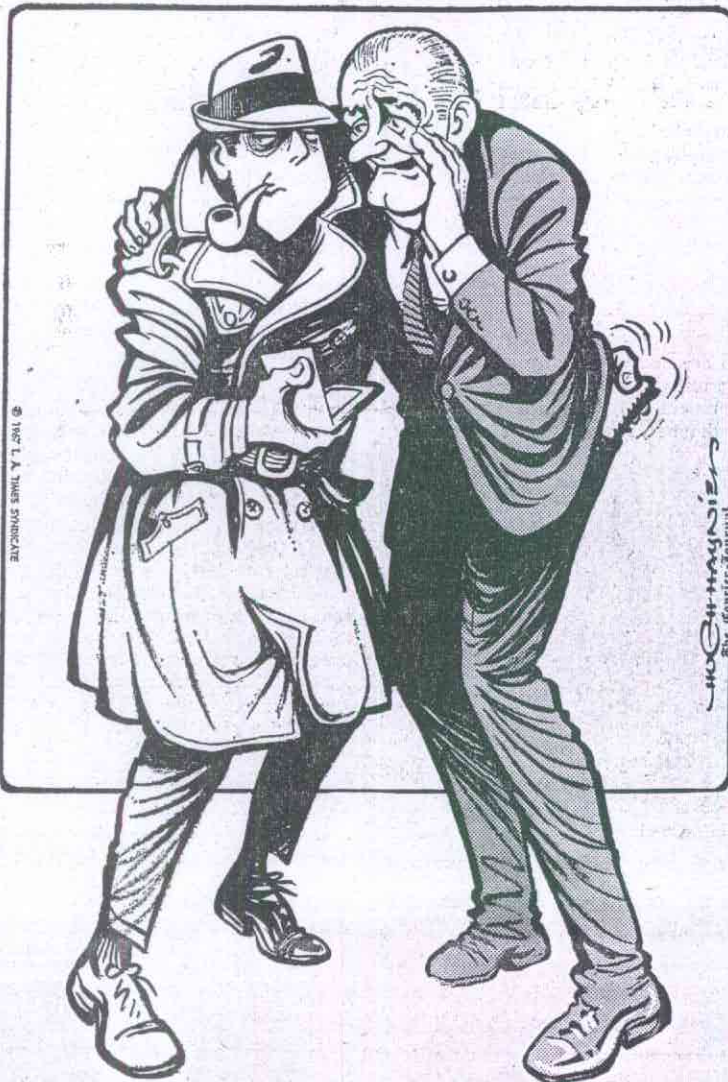


The Washington

SECTION B

CIA Needs a



"Just between us—how far do you CIA people go?"

By John Kenneth Galbraith

Harvard economist Galbraith was an adviser to President John F. Kennedy and has been Ambassador to India.

THE PUBLIC DISCUSSION of a secret agency, even one with such an excellent instinct for headlines as the CIA, is likely to suffer a little from a shortage of information. Few things in my life have concerned me less than the intelligence activities and associated skulduggery of the United States Government. They require an anonymity for which I have no obvious talent. But it happens that for one brief period, I was deeply involved.

Without revealing any secrets, none of which, it should be added, would be of more than momentary interest, or joining the ravening wolves which in Washington pounce on any individual or agency which has problems, I would like to add a little material to the discussion.

My experience was during the Kennedy Administration and especially during the early months. I found when I got into matters in my area of interest that the CIA was doing some things that were frightful nonsense. Their possible value ranged from negative to negligible; the consequences, if properly publicized, would be horrifying.

I set out to bring them to an end. One or two of the bogus liberals who had been washed into Washington with the new Administration warned me that I was making a bad mistake. (One of them, I have now discovered, had

Tug on Its Purse

A Man Who Has Had Some Dealings With the Agency Says It Lacks The Discipline of Penury

been heading an organization financed by the CIA.)

Backed by the President, helped by the soul-searching that followed the Bay of Pigs fiasco and also by some very sensible people within the agency itself, I was successful. Later I had to fight off one or two more richly misconceived adventures, but in general, my troubles were at an end. I learned a good deal of the other and more affirmative work of the organization.

It has, without much doubt, the best staff of any Federal agency or department. There is (or was) a strong esprit based on pride in interesting tasks and in the unsatisfied curiosity of other people as to what the agency is up to. The largest part of the labor involves the collection of information and is not greatly more dramatic than that of the Bureau of the Census.

All intelligence organizations have a special aptitude for what is already known or patently unneeded, and in this respect the CIA is entirely orthodox. In New Delhi—where their activities were generally known to, and involved no conflict with, local authorities—the CIA people were far more disciplined and much more easily managed than the agricultural specialists.

The latter regard themselves as an independent republic never answerable to any lesser urban intelligence.

The problems of the CIA arise in connection with the noninformation gathering activities. And although these attract a slightly different and somewhat more adventuresome individual, the trouble is not—as one might gath-

er from the papers—that, though intelligent, they are subject to recurrent attacks of organized stupidity. The problem lies in the activity itself.

A regularity in American foreign policy, it is one not of original error but of uncorrected obsolescence. As in the case of our China policy, there is a certain stubborn pride in doing the wrong thing simply because we have been doing it for so long.

A Cold War Error

SPECIFICALLY, these activities—they come down to one form or another of encouragement or support to noncommunist or anticommunist organizations, unions, publications, activists, activities or politics—are the product of an obsolete view of the cold war.

In this view, all countries were inherently susceptible to communism; communism itself is a unified, centrally directed and masterful conspiracy; its success or failure depends on the success or failure of its tactics and the skill with which these are countered.

We now know better and so, conceivably, do the Russians. The Communists are divided and deeply concerned with their own quarrels. They are not going to take over the modern industrial nations. And we now know that in much of the so-called third world, communism is irrelevant.

Whether the government of the Congo is Communist or noncommunist, its writ will still run only to the airport. The destiny of Indonesia or India is established by much deeper factors of history, demography and food supply. The problems of birth control and agricultural modernization are precisely as stubborn for one kind of government as for another.

In either case, the people will be desperately poor and many will be kept alive by American food. Certainly the existence of another anticommunist newspaper, organization or union changes nothing.

In Latin America, the prospect for the Communists is unquestionably better. But here the issue turns on the social structure and the only preventive is reform.

An intolerable social structure was what paved the way for Castro in Cuba. No American-sponsored activity, however skilled and devious, could have kept Batista in office or, short of forthright military invasion, over-



"All I know about it is what it's not allowed to tell me about its invaluable functions — which it's not at liberty to reveal — in return for considerable tribute."

thrown Castro once he was in power.

While these things are now largely agreed, the old tactical activities still continue. And when they are brought to light, they naturally look silly. The remedy is to stop them—to accept the reality, which is that the prospects for communism are now but little affected by the kind of tactical measures the CIA deploys. At the same time, the prospects for national discredit are simply superb.

The Other Skeletons

NEEDLESS TO SAY, this reform includes the deletion not only of activities that have been discovered but those that have so far escaped notice, a category which, according to legend, includes some that would be more reassuring to Barry Goldwater. This is important.

Some six other steps are in order. The first is greatly to reduce the volume of unvouchered funds.

The CIA has had too much to spend. Indeed, it is the only organization in my bureaucratic experience which one never had to press to spend money. It was usually pressing to do so. This meant that its activities, or many of

missed as the naive reaction of the amateur. The pro knew how to establish a cover, keep a secret.

Perhaps there will already have been improvement here. When a wide range of deeply secret activity can be exposed all but accidentally by Rep. Wright Patman, confidence in even the deepest cover will have diminished a trifle. More of the members of the agency will be willing to subscribe to Galbraith's Fourth Law of Government, which is that in the United States there are no secrets, only varying delays in achieving notoriety.

A Troublesome Religion

IT IS ALSO necessary to keep a much closer watch on all CIA activities to insure that they are not being influenced by theological anticommunism. This is an especially troublesome religion.

Its morality is that everything that is anticommunist is right. Its intellectual basis is that no one understands communism except the man who has suffered the disillusionment of personal participation or has warred with the comrades in a party, union or veterans' organization. Those who were sharp enough to understand communism all along and govern themselves accordingly are sadly lacking in commitment.

It is the religion of liberal and civilized men that intellectual life is not in the service of the state; it is in the service of itself. Individuals, organizations and above all universities do not accept secret funds for some end they cannot publicly avow.

Theological anticommunism does not hesitate to substitute its higher faith. I don't know how much of this there was in the CIA but clearly it played a part in the recently publicized support to students, unions, churches and garden clubs. I recall that when I was liquidating the enterprises to which I adverted at the outset, I was advised in tones both solemn and angry that I was lousing up a truly momentous crusade.

Healthier Financing

NEXT, WE MUST have a better way of helping organizations and financing work of national importance. Though not consequential in the rise or fall of communism, many of the organizations supported by the CIA did good and useful work and should be kept. Money will be necessary and it will have to be found from other sources.

The invariable answer is the Ford Foundation. This will not serve; not even the Ford Foundation has money enough for everything. The time has come to establish a public foundation supported by some of the funds no longer needed in unvouchered form by

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them, have not been subject to the stern scrutiny which in all ordinary public practice is imposed not by prudence or intelligence but by penury.

The next step is to assume that, sooner or later, what is being done may be known, and the consequences must be weighed. In my experience, it was all but impossible to persuade anyone in the CIA that an activity might be exposed. Such fears were always dis-

the CIA which will openly and publicly support private organizations doing useful work abroad.

It should be headed by an independent board appointed by the President and composed of those men of unimpeachable reputation and respectability who are always in such admirable supply. Student travel, book publication, the overseas activities of unions, travel

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of important people to the United States, possibly even the tab for those foreign entrepreneurs attending that marketing seminar at Harvard could all be financed in this way.

The fact that the Government is publicly supplying funds for such activities is the best proof that it isn't doing so secretly. And no one's independence or virtue need be jeopardized.

There is even greater need that everyone now join in repairing the reputations of the organizations which have had CIA support. Some years ago, while attending one of its meetings in Berlin, I was told by a knowledgeable friend that he thought the Congress for Cultural Freedom might be receiving CIA support. I subjected its treasurer to interrogation and found that the poor fellow had been trained in ambiguity but not dissemblance.

The Congress meeting and seminars were, by a wide margin, the most interesting, lively and informative I had ever attended. Its publications are excellent. Nonetheless, I was disturbed, and I don't think I would have attended any more meetings. (The issue did not arise, for shortly thereafter I went into the Government and was otherwise occupied with the same issue.)

Last autumn, the Congress and the Ford Foundation announced that, whatever the ambiguities of the past, the Ford Foundation had become and would continue to be the sole source of funds for the Congress. I then joined its board of directors and I intend to put some extra effort into its activities. I think this is the right course and I would urge similar effort on behalf of other afflicted but reformed organizations.

Finally, there is the question of future supervision of the CIA. This is certainly not answered by the statement that all past activities have had the approval of the President or a high-level board acting in his behalf and therefore everything it has done has been high national, not low bureaucratic, policy. Only those whose knowledge of Government is entirely exiguous would accept such an argument.

The CIA, like all Government agencies, works aggressively to win approval for what it wants to do. It regards the White House not only as a source of direction but also as a point of clearance. So it is with all other nonsomnambulant agencies of Government.

And so it must be. For in Government, as in all other organized activity, initiative and decision flow up from the organization. In my own time, the CIA also had the State Department member of the approving body in its pocket.

In the field, there is also the problem that a considerable number of ambassadors really do not want to take responsibility for intelligence work. They would like to know what the CIA is doing, but when anything goes wrong, they want to be sure that they are not themselves blamed. And on occasion, they want to use the CIA as a scapegoat for their own failures.

"Of course, we were really relying on the agency boys."

The solution lies partly in getting rid of the nonintelligence activities which, while serving no real purpose, are a recurrent source of trouble. There is no way that foolish and unnecessary action can be so policed as to make it wise and sensible. But for the rest, there is no alternative to holding every-

one concerned much more rigorously responsible than at present.

In recent years, the Government of the United States has shown a strong tendency to become the world's finest mutual protective association. Once it was imagined that men who presided over mistakes which cause great public trouble would be fired, demoted or anyhow held mildly accountable. Now they are automatically exonerated, publicly complimented on their fine character and long and faithful service and eventually posted to a better position in order to avoid any suggestion that there has been stupidity or error. If a man is associated with enough mistakes, he can have quite a career.

The leaders of the CIA are intelligent as well as prudent men. Were they told that they would be held personally responsible for whatever went wrong—that their official necks would be on the block—a new and salutary caution would suffuse the agency.

And it is not enough that ambassadors should have the right to know what is happening in their jurisdictions and to veto what they do not like. They must be held responsible for seeing that things go right. This is not a counsel of perfection but a simple rule for sensible administration. And it is also a tested one.

My own eventual relation with the agency was based on a rather formal understanding by which it accepted my authority and I, in turn, agreed to take full responsibility within the bureaucracy if anything went wrong. There would be no passing of blame. Relations were excellent and nothing much did go wrong.