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Today and Tomorrow . . . By Walter Lippmann

The CIA Affair

THE NOISES you hear around the CIA announce the Big Thaw, which has been under way in Europe for several years, and has now reached America. The ice of the cold war is breaking up, and, as the climate is changing, the landscape is changing too.



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The older and more permanent features of the American scene are reappearing.

Thus, only a year ago in April 1966, the New York Times published a series of articles on the CIA. They exposed more systematically than Ramparts magazine has today the elaborate infiltration of American institutions by the CIA. Yet there was no general outcry. Now there is a tremendous outcry and the CIA operation has begun to smell like a backed up cesspool. This proves that it isn't the activities of the CIA which have changed. What has changed is the public attitude about it.

A year ago the preponderant mass of Americans still felt that they were at war—a cold war if possible, but a nuclear war quite possibly. This is no longer the prevailing American opinion. The same revolution of opinion which has changed the policy of European governments in the early Sixties is now taking place here. The gap which has existed for some years between European and American thinking, the gap which has caused so much misunderstanding and dislike, is closing. In Europe this phenomenon has manifested itself in an almost total loss of interest in NATO and the other institutions of the cold war. Here the change first manifested itself in our acceptance of the changes in Eu-

rope, it manifests itself today in a revulsion against the enormity of the corruption which has resulted from the cold war.

THE ENORMITY of the corruption stems from the secret use of Government funds to deceive the world—to deceive the Communists, to deceive our friends and allies, and to deceive ourselves. It is said that the Soviet Union had paid propagandists masquerading as students, scholars, journalists, trade unionists, and that therefore, we had to give subsidies so that our students could confront the Communists. We had to

fight fire with fire. We must remember today that we were then at war and that all is fair in love and in war.

This is plausible enough. But the event shows that something is wrong with the argument. The event shows that, while a free country like the United States can, if it is sufficiently frightened, imitate the methods of a totalitarian state, once the fear is relaxed, the more enduring tradition and spirit cannot be kept down. In the last analysis a free system like ours can be manipulated only if there is enough panic and fear. The old and real character of the people will not stay suppressed. This is one of the characteristics of a people who have been habituated to freedom so long that it is part of their very nature.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED in this affair is different from the business of spying which is an indispensable part of the rivalry of armed powers. The payments to students, scholars, journalists, has had very little if

anything to do with true intelligence work, with penetrating the military secrets of rival powers, of calculating their capabilities and estimating their intentions.

For the present outcry is about the fact that the United States Government has compromised professions and institutions on whose purity the hopes of American freedom depend. Why did the CIA, with the full responsibility of the Presidents above it, do this? Why did the Government not subsidize openly the students and professors who were to go abroad to argue the American case against the Communists?

They did not do it because they believed that deception was a practical necessity. If the students and professors went openly on Government expense accounts neutral opinion abroad would no longer have treated them as free men and as essentially different from the paid agents of tyranny. That, however, was not the whole reason for the deception. It was deemed necessary to deceive the Congress of the United States and the American people. For the chosen instrument for exposing the Communists was the non-Communist American left, and it would have been virtually impossible to induce the anti-Communist right, the McCarthys, Mundts and the like, to appropriate public money for American leftists. Therefore, everybody had to be deceived.

AS WE ARE recovering our senses, no longer entirely blinded by our fears, we need to examine our consciences and search our souls. We have seen the enormous deception crumble, and the true lesson is the sovereign rule for a people: To yourselves be true. It is not easy to do this when fear and panic are in the air; men are irrational and beside themselves when

they are part of a frightened herd.

As we are ourselves again it becomes self-evident that we cannot play international games as if we were a totalitarian society. For the men who carried out the operation—as good men as we have—were not capable of enough deviousness to deceive everyone and enough terrorism to suppress all doubt. The American way of life has plenty of faults. But it does not prepare our whole people for continuing deception, and we had better make up our minds to play the game from the American strength and not from American weakness, and to stamp out lying as a public policy.

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