

First Line of Defense

The CIA Ignores Criticism and Blunders Along Effectively and Efficiently

By Drew Pearson and Jack Anderson

THE LATEST barrage of bad publicity has driven the faceless men of the Central Intelligence Agency deeper into their closed order and has tightened the padlocks on their steel filing cabinets.

From dismayed insiders, however, we have learned a little about what is wrong with the CIA. The constant attacks have made our embattled cloak-and-dagger men (who really wear narrow-shouldered suits and carry ballpoint pens) supersensitive to criticism.

"The receipt of some unwarranted criticism," explains one source, "has eliminated receptivity to any criticism."

Being privy to the whispers of the world, which the CIA invariably overemphasizes and overclassifies, gives a feeling of omniscience.

Thus all criticism is dismissed as coming from less privileged mortals who don't have the same access to the hidden "truth" and therefore possess only an imperfect understanding of what is really going on.

The CIA is obliged, of course, to give an accounting to a few select congressional and presidential watchdogs. But the CIA chiefs, who specialize in the arts of deception, have little trouble razzle-dazzling the outsiders with a few spy stories.

SECRET KNOWLEDGE is secret power and CIA Director Richard Helms sits in the high policy councils like King Arthur's Merlin ready with his black magic. There is a reluctance to contradict him, an unspoken sense that he possesses some mysterious insight.

In part, this stems from the never-mentioned knowledge that he engages beyond our borders in activities which would be considered immoral within our borders.

There is a compulsive fascination with unethical behavior that can be justified on patriotic grounds—what Secretary of State Rusk has called "the back alley struggle."

Those who enter this subterranean world are some of the most dedicated and devoted, if sometimes misguided, people in Government.

In its insatiable quest for "intelligence," the CIA has supported many corrupt and unpopular politicians around the world. Their political operations have received CIA financing actually as payment for the "intelligence."

Thus, all too often, the CIA has made the United States a partner in corruption, and we have found ourselves sup-

porting an unpopular government. tant anti-Communist statements, then the failures have

There is also an impatience inside the CIA with sophisticated diplomacy, a lack of understanding of the social ferment which is building up stream in many underdeveloped countries. Some CIA men have difficulty distinguishing, say, between a democratic Socialist and a Marxist Communist.

"Even positive operations are corrupted," claims one insider, "by the participation of professional anti-Communists who know what they are against but not what they are for."

Such people, unable to cope with the complexities of indirect political action, have a tendency to adopt paramilitary measures which they do understand. In the name of anti-communism, the CIA has supported overseas leaders whose repressive policies have created the conditions which have caused internal strife and have nourished communism.

FOOLHARDY operations have been justified with mili-

been concealed behind a security screen. Of course, many successes also have never been disclosed because of security—a fact which CIA spokesmen constantly point out to counteract the mistakes which do leak out.

The CIA has committed blunders so colossal that they can only be described as national disasters. But the CIA has also scored some impressive successes. It is loaded with incompetents who hide their incompetency behind security labels. Yet on the whole, the CIA has been both effective and efficient.

There are some facts, such as Soviet nuclear and missile capability, that are absolutely vital to national survival. If our intelligence apparatus should ever fail to produce this information, the President would be compelled to find some other machinery.

Meanwhile, in today's dangerous world with its weapons of mass destruction, the CIA has become our first line of defense.

© 1967, Bell-McClure Syndicate, Inc.