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CIA's Batting Average

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The CIA has asked Arthur D. Little, the firm of management consultants, to make a study of the agency's analytical operations. As a result, the analysis process which yields some of the most important information about the outside world for the highest Washington officials is being reorganized.

CIA officials expect an onslaught on the agency's analytical operations which might in some ways rival the revelations of recent years about covert activities. A new Senate subcommittee on the quality of intelligence under Senator Adlai Stevenson Jr. (D-Ill.) will examine some of the major failures of analytical intelligence in recent years, and the reasons for them.

Some of the most important actions in the foreign policy field depend on the quality of the intelligence analysis which reaches policymakers. It is arguable that if the CIA had concluded that Nikita Khrushchev was in real trouble in 1964, Washington might have made certain foreign policy moves to help him and perhaps to prevent his overthrow. Khrushchev was in trouble partly because he was trying to push through a much more liberal domestic and foreign policy. He was rejecting North Vietnamese requests for help and the demands of his own military for massive arms increases. Both were promptly granted by his successors.

If Khrushchev had remained in power, the course of history would have been very different. But CIA analysts say that Khrushchev himself did not know he was in danger, and that no one in the West was in a position to know. But they are wrong, for their analyses in this case, and in many others, have been consistently challenged by a rival intelligence outfit, known to some of the initiated as the SWC—of which more later.

The SWC circulated two weeks before Khrushchev's fall an analysis which said that he was facing the "greatest challenge" of his career from his Kremlin opponents—a view which was disputed by CIA analysts.

An internal CIA inquiry has concluded that its analysts had failed to consider adequately in the early sixties the broader questions of the developing Sino-Soviet dispute. By contrast, a SWC analysis insisted as early as January 1959 that the friction between Moscow and Peking could become "the

most significant development in the long cold war that lies ahead." The report of the Washington intelligence community, as summed up in an official statement made the following month, was that it would be "wishful thinking" to forecast that either power would allow any differences between them "to outweigh the dominant practical military, political and economic advantages" they derived from their cooperation.

There are many other such examples, ending with a conflict between the views of the CIA and the SWC on what has been happening in China during the past year or two. Last year, when Kissinger was preparing for a trip to Peking, he was given a detailed intelligence analysis of the Chinese situation. This led him to conclude that Teng Hsiao-ping, who was then the deputy to prime minister Chou En-lai, represented "the current consensus" in the Peking leadership, and was already assured of the succession.

The SWC, on the other hand, argued that the signals from Peking "should

not be taken as an authoritative expression of agreed policy," and that Teng's enemies were seeking to expel him from office. The CIA continued to regard Teng as Chou En-lai's most likely successor up to and beyond the moment of Chou's death last January.

The SWC countered, the week after the funeral, that there was every reason to assume that attempts to unseat Teng would continue, and that the Shanghai faction retained the power to challenge him. A month later, on February 17, a secret CIA analysis conceded that, "in retrospect," it was "obvious that Teng's ascension (sic) to power had been opposed at every step." But if it was "obvious" to the CIA after the event, and had been consistently reported by the SWC at the time, should it not have been equally obvious to the CIA from the start?

These examples show that this is a question which Senator Stevenson should be asking about many of the CIA's past efforts. So much of the West's policy toward the Communist world depends on the quality of CIA analysis that the agency's record must be examined most closely. Both the CIA and the policy-makers who use its product may learn a great deal from its failures—and, what is equally important, from its many undoubted successes.

The argument against digging up the earlier failures is that they are in the past, that things have changed, that we should be looking to the future. But things haven't changed. CIA analyses have repeatedly asserted that Mao's successors would join together in a spirit of amity to rule the country. The SWC, on the other hand, argued after Hua Kuo Feng's appointment as Acting Prime Minister that the radicals were

sharpening their knives for him (March 12), and continued to argue after his confirmation that he was under attack in Peking (April 9).

Just before the death of Mao, in August, the CIA produced a series of secret papers on the subject. A study entitled "Mao's Last Hurrah" argued, in contrast to the SWC, that the left and right in Peking would "softpedal their differences" and would probably form "a collective leadership." A further study, "After Mao," said that Hua and the four radical leaders—whom he subsequently overthrew—were likely to form a collective leadership, since "no one person" or faction would be able to dominate the party. The day after Mao's death the CIA's secret "Weekly Summary" concluded that no one had the stature to replace Mao in his full leadership capacity, and that his post of party chairman would probably be retired. In fact, Hua has now formally replaced Mao in his "full leadership capacity," taking over the post of party chairman as well as others not held even by Mao.

The SWC argued after Mao's death, on the other hand, that the struggle in the Politburo between the radicals and the moderates was bound to continue (September 17), and reported that, after a barely decent interval imposed by Mao's death, the two factions had resumed the jockeying for position.

It only remains to recall the surprise which the arrest of Mao's widow produced among most analysts—and to identify the SWC, which, as some readers will have surmised by now, stands for the syndicated weekly column written by none other than myself.