

Alarm Bells Over the CIA Investigator

The probability of bias in the Senate investigation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) hardened into certainty Tuesday morning when Sen. Frank Church of Idaho, chairman of the select investigating committee, disclosed some plans to the committee's senior Republican, Sen. John Tower of Texas.

Church informed Tower he planned to name as committee staff director a veteran Senate staffer and foreign affairs expert named William G. Miller. Church was telling, not asking. The name was only vaguely familiar to Tower, and he offered no protest.

However, when Tower returned to his office to inform his staff, alarm bells sounded. Miller is unofficial leader of the unofficial group of Senate staffers ("A cabal," say Senate hard-liners) who take a revisionist view of the cold war and push for reduced defense expenditures and a softer foreign policy. The word was sent down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, where one senior presidential aide responded with deep distress: "This is an absolute disaster." He and other administration officials wondered how the Republicans let it happen.

In private conversation, Miller has not concealed his opposition to CIA covert operations. Like many fellow members of the "cabal," Miller is a former foreign service officer disgruntled with the past generation of American policy. Although some press accounts of his new assignment describe Miller as a "Republican foreign policy analyst," his positions are far closer to the new left than the GOP.

As aide to then Republican Sen. John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky (now ambassador to East Germany), Miller was a key strategist in the 1969 Senate fight against the anti-ballistic



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missile (ABM) and the 1970 battles to force a unilateral U.S. pullout from Indochina by passing the Cooper-Church amendments.

State Department officials became so frustrated during the ABM fight that they insisted on meeting Cooper without Miller present. One State Department official contends Miller distorted the Senate debate by consistently taking at face value dubious information given him by the Soviet embassy and passing it on to Cooper.

Consequently, there is hope in the administration and among hardline senators that Republicans will apply belated pressure on Church for a more even-handed staff director.

But the Republicans are not united. One investigating committee member,

Sen. Howard Baker of Tennessee, relayed word to us that he has no objections to Miller and has heard none from other senators. That confirms apprehension inside the administration about Baker, who did the CIA great damage a year ago by attempting to saddle it with Watergate sins. Making no secret of his presidential ambitions, Baker is not counted on to restrain chairman Church and chief investigator Miller.