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Allen Dulles and the Politics of Assassination

by Richard Harris Smith

(Note on Smith says he served as a junior intelligence analyst for the CIA in 1967-68, and is the author of a book on the World War II Office of Strategic Services. He is currently at work on a biography of Allen Dulles.)

Excerpts from article:

"Were he alive today, Dulles might well stand before the Church Committee and solemnly swear that he had never discussed CIA assassination plots with Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy. Given his personal ethic as a public servant in seven presidential administrations, it is entirely conceivable that he would protect the reputations of those chief executives, even if it were personally embarrassing, or to the detriment of his beloved intelligence service....

"No plots for political murder could have gone forward in CIA without a 'gentleman's agreement' between the CIA chief and his 'boss.' Nor was Dulles one to shy away from raising the question with the man on high if, under extreme circumstances, he felt the practice of assassination might serve the national interest....

"When [Dulles] finally gave his nod to [the assassination of Castro], it could be only because he had himself received a green light - tacit or explicit - from Dwight Eisenhower and John Kennedy.

"Dulles might 'consider anything' if he felt it would preserve and protect the imperial power of the United States. But he was too politically astute, too dedicated to American representative government, to allow his Agency to become a 'rogue elephant,' hatching plots abroad without the sanction of the nation's highest elected official.

"Allen Dulles liked to remind his aides that he and they served at the pleasure of the President. If his CIA committed acts seen in hindsight, as morally reprehensible the final responsibility must be sought in the Oval Office."