

NY Times

MAR 25 1976

Letters to the Editor

Why Ford's C.I.A. Reform Won't Work

To the Editor:

President Ford's proposals to reform the C.I.A., as announced in his press conference Feb. 17, will not work. What the President plans is to reorganize lines of command and appoint overseers responsible to him. As no one not answerable to the President will be involved in this process, we are being asked to permit the cat to guard the milk. "I would hope," the President stated when questioned on this point, "that the American people will elect a President who will not abuse that responsibility. I certainly don't intend to."

History makes clear that where power can be abused, it will be. Our system of government, taking this into account, is based on the principle that power can only be checked by other power. The power of the President can only be controlled by the independent powers of the Congress and the courts (aided by that unofficial branch of government, an independent press).

The intelligence abuses (both of the C.I.A. and the F.B.I.) which have recently come to light derive not from command failings of the kind that President Ford's proposals address themselves to but from a failure of our Government, to follow the constitutional system. What has gone wrong is that Congress has failed to exercise its proper control over the agencies by allowing its power of the purse (Art. 1, Sect. 9, of the Constitution) to be bypassed. Paragraph 7 of this section states:

"No money shall be drawn from the Treasury, but in consequence of appropriations made by law; and a regular statement and account of the receipts and expenditures of all public money shall be published from time to time."

Acts and procedures by which Congress has permitted the C.I.A. to con-



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ceal its budgets and expenditures are clearly unconstitutional and should be challenged in the courts. No single action will do more to eliminate intelligence abuses or to protect our fundamental liberties than observance of the paragraph quoted above.

A second part of the Ford program, directed at preventing present and former intelligence personnel from revealing abuses of the system, will only further the potential for abuse.

The constitutional principle of separation of powers must be restored to full vigor. If it is not, and the Ford proposal to muzzle intelligence personnel is enacted into law, future historians will mark the Feb. 17 press conference as a landmark in the descent of our nation into the darkness of totalitarianism.

JAMES MUNVES
New York, Feb. 19, 1976