

C.I.A.: Maker of Policy, or Tool?

Survey Finds Widely Feared Agency Is Tightly Controlled

Following is the first of five articles on the Central Intelligence Agency. The articles are by a team of New York Times correspondents consisting of Tom Wicker, John W. Finney, Max Frankel, E. W. Kenworthy and other members of the Times staff.

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, April 24—One day in 1960 an agent of the Central Intelligence Agency caught a plane in Tokyo, flew to Singapore and checked into a hotel room in time to receive a visitor. The agent plugged a lie detector into an overloaded electrical circuit and blew out the lights in the building.

In the investigation that followed, the agent and a C.I.A. colleague were arrested and jailed as American spies.

The result was an international incident that infuriated London, not once but twice. It embarrassed an American Ambassador. It led an American Secretary of State to write a rare letter of apology to a foreign Chief of State.

Five years later that foreign leader was handed an opportunity to denounce the perfidy of all Americans and of the C.I.A. in particular, thus increasing the apprehension of his Oriental neighbors about the agency and enhancing his own political position.

Ultimately, the incident led the United States Government to tell a lie in public and then to admit the lie even more publicly.

The lie was no sooner disclosed than a world predisposed to suspicion of the C.I.A. and unaware of what really had happened in Singapore five years earlier began to repeat questions that have dogged the intelligence agency and the United States Government for years:

¶Was this secret body, which was known to have overthrown governments and installed others, raised armies, staged an invasion of Cuba, spied and counterspied, established airlines, radio stations and schools and supported books, magazines and businesses, running out of the control of its supposed political master?

The Central Intelligence Agency, which does not often appear in the news, made headlines on two counts in recent days. The agency was found to have interceded in the slander trial of one of its agents in an effort to obtain his exoneration without explanation except that he had done its bidding in the interests of national security. And it was reported to have planted at least five agents among Michigan State University scholars engaged in a foreign aid project some years ago in Vietnam. Although the specific work of these agents and the circumstances of their employment are in dispute, reports of their activities have raised many questions about the purposes and methods of the C.I.A., and about its relationship to other parts of the Government and nongovernmental institutions. Even larger questions about control of the C.I.A. within the framework of a free government and about its role in foreign affairs are periodically brought up in Congress and among other governments. To provide background for these questions, and to determine what issues of public policy are posed by the agency's work, The New York Times has spent several months looking into its affairs. This series is the result.

¶Was it in fact damaging, while it sought to advance, the national interest? Could it spend huge sums for ransoms, bribes and subversion without check or regard for the consequences?

¶Did it lie to or influence the political leaders of the United States to such an extent that it really was an "invisible government" more powerful than even the President?

These are questions constantly asked around the world. Some of them were raised again recently when it was disclosed that Michigan State University was the cover for some C.I.A. agents in South Vietnam during a multimillion-dollar technical assistance program the university conducted for the regime of the late President Ngo Dinh Diem.

Last week, it also became known that an Estonian refugee who was being sued for slander in a Federal District Court in Baltimore was resting his defense on the fact that the alleged slander had been committed in the course of his duties as a C.I.A. agent.

In a public memorandum addressed to the court, the C.I.A. stated that it had ordered the agent, Juri Raus, to disclose no further details of the case, in order to protect the nation's foreign intelligence apparatus. Mr. Raus is claiming complete legal immunity from the suit on the grounds that he had acted as an official agent of the Federal Government.

Such incidents, bringing the activities of the C.I.A. into dim and often dismaying public view, have caused members of Congress and many publications to question ever more persistently the role and propriety of one of Washington's most discussed and least understood institutions. Some of the misgivings

have been shared by at least two American Presidents, Harry S. Truman and John F. Kennedy.

A Wide Examination

To seek reliable answers to these questions; to sift, where possible, fact from fancy and theory from condition; to determine what real questions of public policy and international relations are posed by the existence and operations of the C.I.A., The New York Times has compiled information and opinions from informed Americans throughout the world.

It has obtained reports from 20 foreign correspondents and editors with recent service in more than 35 countries and from reporters in Washington who interviewed more than 50 present and former Government officials, members of Congress and military officers.

This study, carried out over several months, disclosed, for instance, that the Singapore affair resulted not from a lack of political control or from recklessness by the C.I.A., but from bad fortune and diplomatic blundering.

It found that the C.I.A., for all its fearsome reputation, is under far more stringent political and budgetary control than most of its critics know or concede, and that since the Bay of Pigs disaster in Cuba in 1961 these controls have been tightly exercised.

The consensus of those interviewed was that the critics' favorite recommendation for a stronger rein on the agency—a Congressional committee to oversee the C.I.A.—would probably provide little more real control than now exists and might both restrict the agency's effectiveness and actually shield it from those who desire more knowledge about its operations.

A Matter of Will

Other important conclusions of the study include the following:

¶While the institutional forms of political control appear effective and sufficient, it is really the will of the political officials who must exert control that is important and that has most often been lacking.

¶Even when control is tight and effective, a more important question may concern the extent to which C.I.A. information and policy judgments affect political decisions in foreign affairs.

¶Whether or not political control is being exercised, the more serious question is whether the very existence of an efficient C.I.A. causes the United States Government to rely too much on clandestine and illicit activities, back-alley tactics, subversion and what is known in official jargon as "dirty tricks."

¶Finally, regardless of the facts, the C.I.A.'s reputation in the world is so horrendous and its role in events so exaggerated that it is becoming a burden on American foreign policy, rather than the secret weapon it was intended to be.

The Singapore incident, with its bizarre repercussions five years later, is an excellent lesson in how that has happened, although none of the fears of the critics are justified by the facts of the particular case.

Problem in Singapore

The ill-fated agent who blew out the lights flew from Tokyo to Singapore only after a prolonged argument inside the C.I.A. Singapore, a strategic Asian port with a large Chinese population, was soon to get its independence from Britain and enter the Malaysian Federation. Should C.I.A. recruit some well-placed spies, or should it, as before, rely on MI-6, the British secret service, and on Britain's ability to maintain good relations and good sources in Singapore?

Allen W. Dulles, then the C.I.A.'s director, decided to infiltrate the city with its own agents, to make sure that the British were sharing everything they knew. Although the decision was disputed, it is not uncommon in any intelligence service to bypass or double-check on an ally.

(On Vice President Humphrey's visit late last year to the capitals of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines, Secret Service agents found at least three "bugs," or listening devices, hidden in his private quarters by one of his hosts.)

The agent who flew from Tokyo to Singapore was on a recruiting mission, and the lie detector, an instrument used by the C.I.A. on its own employees, was intended to test the reliability of a local candidate for a spy's job.

When the machine shorted out the lights in the hotel, the visiting agent, the would-be spy and another C.I.A. man were discovered. They wound up in a Singapore jail. There they were reported to have been "tortured"—either for real, or to extract a ransom.

The Price Was High

Secret discussions—apparently through C.I.A. channels—

The C.I.A.—Maker of Policy, or Tool? Agency Raises Questions Around World

SURVEY DISCLOSES STRICT CONTROLS

But Reputation of Agency Is Found to Make tl a Burden on U.S. Action

were held about the possibility of buying the agents' freedom with increased American foreign aid, but Washington eventually decided Singapore's price was too high. The men were subsequently released.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk—the Kennedy Administration had succeeded to office in January, 1961—wrote a formal apology to Premier Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore and promised to discipline the culprits.

That appeared to have ended the matter until last fall, when Premier Lee broke away from the Malaysian Federation and sought to establish himself for political reasons as more nearly a friend of Britain than of the United States, although his anti-Americanism was short of pro-Communism.

To help achieve this purpose, Mr. Lee disclosed the 1960 "affront" without giving any details, except to say that he had been offered a paltry \$3.3-million bribe when he had demanded \$33-million.

The State Department, which had been routinely fed a denial of wrongdoing by C.I.A. officials who did not know of the Rusk apology, described the charge as false. Mr. Lee then published Mr. Rusk's letter of 1961 and threatened also to play some interesting tape recordings for the press.

Hastily, Washington confessed—not to the bribe offer, which is hotly denied by all officials connected with the incident, or to the incident itself, but to having done *something* that had merited an apology.

London, infuriated in the first instance by what it considered the C.I.A.'s mistrust of MI-6, now fumed a second time about clumsy tactics in Washington.

Acting on Orders

Errors of bureaucracy and mishaps of chance can easily be found in the Singapore incident, but critics of the C.I.A. cannot easily find in it proof of the charges so often raised about the agency—"control," "making policy" and "undermining policy."

The agent in Singapore was acting on direct orders from Washington. His superiors in the C.I.A. were acting within the directives of the President

and the National Security Council. The mission was not contrary to American foreign policy, was not undertaken to change or subvert that policy, and was not dangerously foolhardy. It was not much more than routine—and would not have been unusual in any intelligence service in the world.

Nevertheless, the Singapore incident—the details of which have been shrouded in the C.I.A.'s enforced secrecy—added greatly to the rising tide of dark suspicion that many people throughout the world, including many in this country, harbor about the agency and its activities.

Carl Rowan, the former director of the United States Information Agency and former Ambassador to Finland, wrote last year in his syndicated column that "during a recent tour of East Africa and Southeast Asia, it was made clear to me that suspicion and fear of the C.I.A. has become a sort of Achilles heel of American foreign policy."

President Sukarno of Indonesia, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's Chief of State, President Jomo Kenyatta of Kenya, former President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana and many other leaders have repeatedly insisted that behind the regular American government there is an "invisible government," the C.I.A., threatening them all with infiltration, subversion and even war. Communist China and the Soviet Union sound this theme endlessly.

"The Invisible Government" was the phrase applied to American intelligence agencies, and particularly the C.I.A., in a book of that title by David Wise and Thomas B. Ross. It was a best-seller in the United States and among many government officials abroad.

Subject of Humor

So prevalent is the C.I.A. reputation of menace in so much of the world that even humorists have taken note of it. The New Yorker magazine last December printed a cartoon showing two natives of an unspecified country watching a volcano erupt. One native is saying to the other: "The C.I.A. did it. Pass the word."

In Southeast Asia, even the most rational leaders are said to be ready to believe anything about the C.I.A.

"Like Dorothy Parker and the things she said," one observer notes, "the C.I.A. gets credit or blame both for what it does and for many things it has not even thought of doing."

Many earnest Americans, too, are bitter critics of the C.I.A.

Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, Democrat of Minnesota, has charged that the agency "is making foreign policy and in so doing is assuming the roles of

President and Congress." He has introduced a proposal to create a special Foreign Relations subcommittee to make a "full and complete" study of the effects of C.I.A. operations on United States foreign relations.

Senator Stephen M. Young, Democrat of Ohio, has proposed that a joint Senate-House committee oversee the C.I.A. because, "wrapped in a cloak of secrecy, the C.I.A. has, in effect, been making foreign policy."

Mayor Lindsay of New York, while a Republican member of Congress, indicted the C.I.A. on the House floor for a long series of fiascos, including the most famous blunder in recent American history—the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba.

Former President Harry S. Truman, whose Administration established the C.I.A. in 1947, said in 1963 that by then he saw "something about the way the C.I.A. has been functioning that is casting a shadow over our historic positions, and I feel that we need to correct it."

Kennedy's Bitterness

And President Kennedy, as the enormity of the Bay of Pigs disaster came home to him, said to one of the highest officials of his Administration that he wanted "to splinter the C.I.A. in a thousand pieces and scatter it to the winds."

Even some who defend the C.I.A. as the indispensable eyes and ears of the Government—for example Allen Dulles, the agency's most famous director—now fear that the cumulative criticism and suspicion, at home and abroad, have impaired the C.I.A.'s effectiveness and therefore the nation's safety.

They are anxious to see the criticisms answered and the suspicions allayed, even if—in some cases—the agency should thus become more exposed to domestic politics and to compromises of security.

"If the establishment of a Congressional committee with responsibility for intelligence would quiet public fears and restore public confidence in the C.I.A.," Mr. Dulles said in an interview, "then I now think it would be worth doing despite some of the problems it would cause the agency."

Because this view is shared in varying degree by numerous friends of the C.I.A. and because its critics are virtually unanimous in calling for more "control," most students of the problem have looked to Congress for a remedy.

In the 19 years that the C.I.A. has been in existence, 150 resolutions for tighter Congressional control have been introduced—and put aside. The statistic in itself is evidence of widespread uneasiness about the C.I.A. and of how little is known about the agency.

For the truth is that despite the C.I.A.'s international reputation, few persons in or out of the American Government know much about its work, its organization, its supervision or its relationship to the other arms of the executive branch.

A former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for instance, had no idea how big the C.I.A. budget was. A Senator, experienced in foreign affairs, proved, in an interview, to know very little about, but to fear very much, its operations.

Many critics do not know that virtually all C.I.A. expenditures must be authorized in advance—first by an Administration committee that includes some of the highest-ranking political officials and White House staff assistants, then by officials in the Bureau of the Budget, who have the power to rule out or reduce an expenditure.

They do not know that, instead of a blank check, the C.I.A. has an annual budget of a little more than \$500-million—only one-sixth the \$3-billion the Government spends on its overall intelligence effort. The National Security Agency, a cryptographic and code-breaking operation run by the Defense Department, and almost never questioned by outsiders, spends twice as much as the C.I.A.

The critics shrug aside the fact that President Kennedy, after the most rigorous inquiry into the agency's affairs, methods and problems after the Bay of Pigs, did not "splinter" it after all and did not recommend Congressional supervision.

They may be unaware that since then supervision of intelligence activities has been tightened. When President Eisenhower wrote a letter to all Ambassadors placing them in charge of all American activities in their countries, he followed it with a secret letter specifically *exempting* the C.I.A.; but when President Kennedy put the Ambassadors in command of all activities, he sent a secret letter specifically *including* the C.I.A. It is still in effect but, like all directives, variously interpreted.

Out of a Spy Novel

The critics, quick to point to the agency's publicized blunders and setbacks, are not mollified by its genuine achievements—its precise prediction of the date on which the Chinese Communists would explode a nuclear device; its fantastic world of electronic devices; its use of a spy, Oleg Penkovskiy, to reach into the Kremlin itself; its work in keeping the Congo out of Communist control; or the feat—straight from a spy novel—of arranging things so that when Gamal Abdel Nasser came to power in Egypt the "management consultant" who had an office next to the Arab leader's and who was one of his prin-

cial advisers was a C.I.A. operative.

When the U-2 incident is mentioned by critics, as it always is, the emphasis is usually on the C.I.A.'s—and the Eisenhower Administration's—blunder in permitting Francis Gary Powers's flight over the Soviet Union in 1960, just before a scheduled summit conference. Not much is usually said of the incalculable intelligence value of the undisturbed U-2 flights between 1956 and 1960 over the heartland of Russia.

And when critics frequently charge that C.I.A. operations contradict and sabotage official American policy, they may not know that the C.I.A. is often overruled in its policy judgments.

As an example, the C.I.A. strongly urged the Kennedy Administration not to recognize the Egyptian-backed Yemeni regime and warned that President Nasser would not quickly pull his troops out of Yemen. Ambassador John Badeau thought otherwise. His advice was accepted, the republic was recognized, President Nasser's troops remained—and much military and political trouble followed that the C.I.A. had foreseen and the State Department had not.

Nor do critics always give the C.I.A. credit where it is due for its vital and daily service as an accurate and encyclopedic source of quick news, information, analysis and deduction about everything from a new police chief in Mozambique to an aid agreement between Communist China and Albania, from the state of President Sukarno's health to the meaning of Nikita S. Khrushchev fall from power.

Yet the critics' favorite indictments are spectacular enough to explain the world's suspicions and fears of the C.I.A. and its operations.

A sorry episode in Asia in the early nineteen-fifties is a frequently cited example. C.I.A. agents gathered remnants of the defeated Chinese Nationalist armies in the jungles of northwest Burma, supplied them with gold and arms and encouraged them to raid Communist China.

One aim was to harass Peking to a point where it might retaliate against Burma, forcing the Burmese to turn to the United States for protection.

Actually, few raids occurred, and the army became a troublesome and costly burden. The C.I.A. had enlisted the help of Gen. Phao Sriyanod, the police chief of Thailand—and a leading narcotics dealer. The Nationalists, with the planes and gold furnished them by the agents, went into the opium business. By the time the "anti-Communist" force could be disbanded, and the C.I.A. could wash its hands of it, Burma had renounced American aid, threatened to quit the United Nations and moved closer to Peking.

Moreover, some of the Nationalist Chinese are still in northern Burma, years later, and still fomenting trouble and infuriating governments in that area, although they have not been supported by the C.I.A. or any American agency for a decade.

In 1958, a C.I.A.-aided operation involving South Vietnamese

agents and Cambodian rebels was interpreted by Prince Sihanouk as an attempt to overthrow him. It failed but drove him farther down the road that ultimately led to his break in diplomatic relations with Washington.

Indonesian Venture

In Indonesia in the same year, against the advice of American diplomats, the C.I.A. was authorized to fly in supplies from Taiwan and the Philippines to aid army officers rebelling against President Sukarno in Sumatra and Java. An American pilot was shot down on a bombing mission and was released only at the insistent urging of the Kennedy Administration in 1962. Mr. Sukarno, naturally enough, drew the obvious conclusions; how much of his fear and dislike of the United States can be traced to those days is hard to say.

In 1960, C.I.A. agents in Laos, disguised as "military advisers," stuffed ballot boxes and engineered local uprisings to help a hand-picked strongman, Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, set up a "pro-American" government that was desired by President Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles.

This operation succeeded—so much so that it stimulated Soviet intervention on the side of leftist Laotians, who counter-attacked the Phoumi government. When the Kennedy Administration set out to reverse the policy of the Eisenhower Administration, it found the

C.I.A. deeply committed to Phoumi Nosovan and needed two years of negotiations and threats to restore the neutralist regime of Prince Souvanna Phouma.

Pro-Communist Laotians, however, were never again driven from the border of North Vietnam, and it is through that region that the Vietcong in South Vietnam have been supplied and replenished in their war to destroy still another C.I.A.-aided project, the non-Communist government in Saigon.

Catalogue of Charges

It was the C.I.A. that built up Ngo Dinh Diem as the pro-American head of South Vietnam after the French, through Emperor Bao Dai, had found him in a monastery cell in Belgium and brought him back to Saigon as Premier. And it was the C.I.A. that helped persuade the Eisenhower and Kennedy Administrations to ride out the Vietnamese storm with Diem—probably too long.

These recorded incidents not only have prompted much soul-searching about the influence of an instrument such as the C.I.A. on American policies but also have given the C.I.A. a reputation for deeds and misdeeds far beyond its real intentions and capacities.

Through spurious reports, gossip, misunderstandings, deep-seated fears and forgeries and falsifications, the agency has been accused of almost anything anyone wanted to accuse it of.

- It has been accused of:
- ¶Plotting the assassination of Jawaharlal Nehru of India.
- ¶Provoking the 1965 war between India and Pakistan.
- ¶Engineering the "plot" that became the pretext for the murder of leading Indonesia generals last year.
- ¶Supporting the rightist army plots in Algeria.
- ¶Murdering Patrice Lumumba in the Congo.
- ¶Kidnapping Moroccan agents in Paris.
- ¶Plotting the overthrow of President Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana.

All of these charges and many similar to them are fabrications, authoritative officials outside the C.I.A. insist.

The C.I.A.'s notoriety even enables some enemies to recover from their own mistakes. A former American official unconnected with the agency recalls that pro-Chinese elements in East Africa once circulated a document urging revolts against several governments. When this inflammatory message backfired on its authors, they promptly spread the word that it was a C.I.A. forgery designed to discredit them—and some believed the falsehood.

Obvious Deduction

"Many otherwise rational African leaders are ready to take forgeries at face value," one observer says, "because deep down they honestly fear the C.I.A. Its image in this part of the world couldn't be worse."



"The C.I.A. did it. Pass it along."

Drawing by Alan Dunn; © 1965 The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

THE C.I.A.—GOOD, BAD OR OTHERWISE? Much discussed and criticized, the Central Intelligence Agency has not escaped humorous treatment either. Its detractors loudly condemn it, nearly everyone talks about it, but very few really understand it.

The image feeds on the rank-est of fabrications as well as on the wildest of stories—for the simple reason that the wildest of stories are not always false, and the C.I.A. is often involved and all too often obvious.

When an embassy subordinate in Lagos, Nigeria, known to be the C.I.A. station chief had a fancier house than the United States Ambassador, Nigerians made the obvious deduction about who was in charge.

When President João Goulart of Brazil fell from power in 1964 and C.I.A. men were accused of being among his most energetic opponents, exaggerated conclusions as to who had ousted him were natural.

It is not only abroad that such C.I.A. involvements—real or imaginery—have aroused dire fears and suspicions. Theodore C. Sorensen has written, for instance, that the Peace Corps in its early days strove manfully, and apparently successfully, to keep its ranks free of C.I.A. infiltration.

Other Government agencies, American newspapers and business concerns, charitable foundations, research institutions and universities have, in some cases, been as diligent as Soviet agents in trying to protect themselves from C.I.A. penetration. They have not always been so successful as the Peace Corps.

Some of their fear has been misplaced; the C.I.A. is no longer so dependent on clandestine agents and other institutions' resources. But as in the case of its overseas reputation, its actual activities in the United States—for instance, its aid in financing a center for international studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology—have made the fear of infiltration real to many scholars and businesses.

The revelation that C.I.A. agents served among Michigan State University scholars in South Vietnam from 1955 to 1959 has contributed to the fear. The nature of the agents' work and the circumstances of their employment are in dispute, but their very involvement, even relatively long ago, has aroused concern that hundreds of scholarly and charitable American efforts abroad will be tainted and hampered by the suspicions of other governments.

Thus, it is easy for sincere men to believe deeply that the C.I.A. must be brought "to heel" in the nation's own interest. Yet every well-informed official and former official with recent knowledge of the C.I.A. and its activities who was interviewed confirmed what Secretary of State Rusk has said publicly—that the C.I.A. "does not initiate actions unknown to the high policy leaders of the Government."

The New York Times survey left no doubt that, whatever its miscalculations, blunders and misfortunes, whatever may have been the situation during its bumptious early days and during its over-hasty expansion in and after the Korean War, the agency acts today not on its own but with the approval and under the control of the political leaders of the United States Government.

But that virtually undisputed fact raises in itself the central questions that emerge from the survey: What is control? And who guards the guards?

For it is upon information provided by the C.I.A. itself that those who must approve its activities are usually required to decide.

It is the C.I.A. that has the money (not unlimited but ample) and the talent (as much as any agency) not only to conceive but also to carry out projects of great importance—and commensurate risk.

Action, If Not Success

It is the C.I.A., unlike the Defense Department with its service rivalries, budget concerns and political involvements, and unlike the State Department with its international diplomatic responsibilities and its vulnerability to criticism, that is freest of all agencies to advocate its projects and press home its views; the C.I.A. can promise action, if not success.

And both the agency and those who must pass upon its plans are shielded by security from the outside oversight and review under which virtually all other officials operate, at home and abroad.

Thus, while the survey left no doubt that the C.I.A. operates under strict forms of control, it raised the more serious question whether there was always the substance of control.

In many ways, moreover, public discussion has become too centered on the question of control. A more disturbing matter may be whether the nation has allowed itself to go too far in the grim and sometimes deadly business of espionage and secret operations.

One of the best-informed men on this subject in Washington described that business as "ugly, mean and cruel." The agency loses men and no one ever hears of them again, he said, and when "we catch one of them" (a Soviet or other agent), it becomes necessary "to get everything out of them and we do it with no holds barred."

Secretary Rusk has said publicly that there is "a tough struggle going on in the back alleys all over the world." "It's a tough one, it's unpleasant, and no one likes it, but that is not a field which can be left entirely the other side," he said.

The back-alley struggle, he concluded, is "a never-ending war, and there's no quarter asked and none given."

'Struggle for Freedom'

But that struggle, Mr. Rusk insisted, is "part of the struggle for freedom."

No one seriously disputes that the effort to gain intelligence about real or potential enemies, even about one's friends, is a vital part of any government's activities, particularly a government so burdened with responsibility as the United States Government in the 20th century.

But beyond their need for information, how far should the political leaders of the United States go in approving the clandestine violation of treaties and borders, financing of coups, influencing of parties and govern-

ments, without tarnishing and retarding those ideas of freedom and self-government they proclaim to the world?

And how much of the secrecy and autonomy necessary to carry out such acts can or should be tolerated by a free society?

There are no certain or easy answers. But these questions cannot even be discussed knowledgeably on the basis of the few glimpses—accidental or intentional—that the public has so far been given into the private world of the C.I.A.

That world is both dull and lurid, often at the same time.

A year ago, for instance, it was reported that some of the anti-Castro Cuban survivors of the Bay of Pigs were flying in combat in deepest, darkest Africa. Any Madison Avenue publisher would recognize that as right out of Ian Fleming and James Bond.

But to the bookish and tweedy men who labor in the pastoral setting of the C.I.A.'s huge building on the banks of the Potomac River near Langley, Va., the story was only a satisfying episode in the back-alley version of "Struggle for Freedom."

Tomorrow: Who and what is the C.I.A.?