

Subversion by C.I.A. NY TIMES 10 JUN 70

The disclosure that the American economic aid mission in Laos is being used as a cover for intelligence operations in Laos is nothing less than a body blow to the credibility of the peaceful presence of the United States in neutral and friendly nations. The decision to allow the Central Intelligence Agency to subvert an important foreign mission was made during the Kennedy Administration in 1962. The fact that it has thus persisted under three Presidents dramatizes the extent to which the debasement of national and diplomatic ethics has become a non-partisan evil.

John A. Hannah, Administrator of the Agency for International Development, has special reason to recognize the harm done by these undercover games. He knows from bitter experience that they undermine the universities and their scholars who, as keys to the success of both AID and the United States Information Agency, become the unwitting accomplices to the shady business. Dr. Hannah was president of Michigan State University when it became known that one of its foreign task forces had been infiltrated by the C.I.A. in South Vietnam between 1955 and 1959.

Although Dr. Hannah's candid admission is to his credit, his claim that the situation in Laos is a unique transgression strains credulity. To say, as he did, that "our preference is to get rid of this kind of operation" is an understatement that raises serious questions. What arrogance of power is it that resists "our preference," the preference of decent Americans? What are the limits of a usurpation of such power by the military and the C.I.A.?

Unless these questions are frankly answered, the nation's friends abroad and its youth at home will become increasingly cynical about all American claims and goals. It is the road to alienation and isolationism. This is a price this country cannot afford to pay.