

By Harry Rositzke

MIDDLEBURG, Va.—The dramatic and divisive issue of secret operations abroad has again been raised by the recent exposures of the United States role in Chile. These operations have been challenged as an illegal and immoral form of diplomacy impermissible in an open society. They have been derided as antiquated holdovers from the cold war, and have been denounced as acts of the executive not open to Congressional or popular judgment.

The basic questions raised are simple: What, if any, secret operations should the United States carry out abroad? Who is to control them?

With Harry S. Truman's assignment to the Central Intelligence Agency in 1948 of a charter for secret-action operations, in addition to its espionage and counterespionage missions, successive Administrations have without exception used their secret arm of Government to achieve foreign policy objectives for which they could not, or would not, openly use the resources of the State and Defense Departments.

Two main types of action operations, political and paramilitary, vary in method, scale and degree of secrecy.

The most expensive, conspicuous and flagrantly illegal are paramilitary operations. During the early stages of the cold war, they were directed against the Soviet orbit itself, many in support of resistance groups in the Baltic countries, the Ukraine, Poland and Albania, and after the Korean war in northern China.

In the nineteen-fifties, President Dwight D. Eisenhower approved support for the Indonesian rebels against President Sukarno and authorized the invasion of Guatemala to prevent the introduction of Soviet arms into the Western Hemisphere.

He left to his successor, John F. Kennedy, the legacy of paramilitary action, which resulted in disaster against Premier Fidel Castro's regime.

After the Bay of Pigs, the C.I.A.'s paramilitary capability was concentrated almost exclusively in Indochina.

Political-action operations—secret support of foreign leaders, political parties and labor unions, and the preparation of coups and countercoups—have been carried out under the aegis of every postwar President.

Under Mr. Truman, the anti-Communist fight focused on Europe, starting with substantial open and secret support for Italy's democratic forces to stave off a Communist victory in the 1948 elections. Mr. Eisenhower's main political-action moves were in the Middle East, both with backdoor diplomacy in the Arab countries and the unseating of the regime of Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran.

A C.I.A. political-action role was an intrinsic part of Mr. Kennedy's counterinsurgency program, which was carried on by Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon. The Alliance for Progress in Latin America entailed support for friendly governments in countering domestic insurgencies as well as action against regimes sympathetic to Havana or Moscow.

In friendly countries, the C.I.A. trained and equipped national police and security organs to deal on their own with active insurgencies, mainly in Bolivia and Venezuela, but on a smaller scale in other countries as well. In countries such as Ecuador or Brazil, which were willing or eager to recognize Mr. Castro's Cuba, it helped to weaken or replace regimes.

Chile's place in this over-simple paradigm is unique. In a society with a solid democratic tradition, a "friendly" Government not facing a domestic insurgency was replaced in a free election by an "unfriendly" coalition of parties enjoying strong financial and political support from Moscow and Havana. Secret political action was called upon to supplement American policy both before and after the election of Dr. Salvador Allende Gossens as President in 1970.

Although the legal and moral issues involved in interfering in the affairs of

other countries may never be settled to the satisfaction of the Congress, the news media or the public, there are some steps President Ford can take now to reduce the confusion, and possibly the debate, about American secret operations abroad.

A first simple step would be to transfer the responsibility for secret paramilitary operations to the Defense Department. Never totally secret, demanding complex logistic support, they do not belong in a secret civilian agency.

Political contacts ranging from senior government officials to labor leaders are a natural element in any secret intelligence service. If such contacts are used for action purposes, they can normally be kept secret—short of coups or high-level leaks.

There will be occasions, even in a world of détente, when the executive will decide that secret political action is required.

The President can most effectively appease some critics by inviting selected representatives of Congress to sit with the National Security Council when it considers secret-action proposals. What Congress needs are previews—not more post-mortems.

*Harry Rositzke worked in secret operations for 27 years with the Office of Strategic Services and the Central Intelligence Agency before his retirement in 1970.*