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# The Value Of the C. I. A.

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By Ray S. Cline

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WASHINGTON—The surge of sentimental piety and outrage over the public disclosure that the Central Intelligence Agency had attempted to influence the course of political events in Chile in the nineteen-seventies has shed more heat than light.

All great countries attempt to influence events in other countries when these events affect their interests: Other nations try to influence our domestic politics; the Soviet Union and China have a well-defined and widely-known philosophy of attempting to promote violent social and political revolution in all non-Communist countries.

The C.I.A. did not invent covert political-action programs—that is, action to influence political events abroad without the Government's official hand showing. It was Soviet efforts to intervene through local Communist parties and large-scale infusion of money into Western Europe that first led to a C.I.A. counter-effort.

President Truman took this step on the advice of very competent and patriotic men, particularly Gen. George C. Marshall and Defense Secretary James V. Forrestal.

This happened in 1948, a crucial year, especially for the future of Europe. The Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia and the Berlin blockade frightened most Americans then. Fear of Soviet domination of most of Europe led to the Marshall Plan and creation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

The same fear led to the decision in favor of secret efforts to assist moderate, center and center-left political leaders re-establish a multiparty parliamentary system in Italy and in other nations threatened by strong local Communist movements supported by Moscow.

Thus, American funds were made available to democratic political parties and the democratic press. Because the Europeans were determined to avoid one-party dictatorship and Soviet domination, they accepted this covert aid, using it to their advantage, and ours.

The C.I.A. did not act on its own. It has never initiated such covert programs without approval of appropriate authorities acting on the President's behalf or on direct instructions



Photograph by Duane Michals

from the President himself.

The authority for such decision-making is the National Security Council, set up in 1947 to deal with military and political considerations in American strategic and foreign policies. The C.I.A. is purely an instrument of policy. To belabor it for carrying out covert-action programs is pointless.

The tendency to blame the C.I.A. for failed programs when they are publicized is dangerous because the effect on the public and on Congressmen who vote for C.I.A. funds is to discredit the country's whole intelligence organization.

The best term for this organization is "intelligence community" because it is a coordinated group of agencies in the State, Defense and other departments as well as in the C.I.A. Most of the agencies' work involves collection, evaluation, analysis and reporting of intelligence. The entire intelligence community's total effort devoted to covert political actions of any kind in recent years has been between one and 2 per cent of the total program.

This level is falling. There are no political-action programs under way now. It would be a shame if a furor over the Chilean operation caused the C.I.A. to be so damaged in public and Congressional esteem that it cannot carry on its absolutely indispensa-

ble work on behalf of our safety.

The Chilean program, whether well-advised or not, was focused on furnishing money needed to keep the opposition news media alive so that groups whose activities are considered compatible with United States interests would continue to be heard despite efforts to silence them. It also provided campaign funds to center parties, mainly the Christian Democrats. The money spent in Chile, and other places, was spent to keep options before the voters.

The principal supporters of President Salvador Allende Gossens' administration intended to establish a dictatorship of the revolutionary left, abolish Congress and neutralize or destroy the entire managerial and middle class. The administration received aid and credit from Communist countries, much of which it did not have time to use, totaling about \$600 million. The United States gave about \$8 million to the parties fighting to keep Congress and constitutional democratic guarantees alive until the 1976 election.

I hope the center groups still surviving will be able to restore parliamentary government. If so, it probably will be done without American help, in view of United States Congressional and public criticism.

Clearly, American covert aid should

be given rarely, specifically when it will help stabilize a friendly nation's politics by keeping constitutional government alive.

Perhaps the effort in Chile was a mistake. It certainly did not succeed.

Everyone is entitled to his own view of whether Americans will ever again want, or be able, to conduct covert political action to support like-minded people abroad when our help would make a crucial difference in their survival. I suspect that in the troubled world situation ahead the responsible consensus will again favor it just as in 1948.

I think we should not be obsessed with piety but instead should think earnestly of every way possible short of total war to insure that our society and political structures and alliances with like-minded peoples will continue to flourish in the face of a threatening international economic and political environment.

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