

A Nixon Scandal In CIA's Misuse

THE DISCLOSURE by the New York Times of a circumstantial history of wrongful and illegal use of the Central Intelligence Agency by the Nixon administration for spying on American citizens suspected of being antiwar dissidents is shocking.

We hope senators and congressmen with lively sensitivity toward the lawful rights of Americans will dutifully follow up these disclosures. Vigilance in exposing the CIA for totally unacceptable internal espionage is necessary for the health of the country. A sickly police state smell emanates from the news, reported by Seymour M. Hersh, of a "massive illegal CIA domestic intelligence operation." Furthermore, it is necessary to have it exposed to save the CIA itself from explosive suspicions that left unresolved, could destroy the agency.

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FORTUNATELY, GERALD FORD is a President who reads the papers, and on Sunday, after reading the Times account of the CIA's activity he went on television within his airplane to assure the country that he would not tolerate any such operation within the United States in his administration.

The story that will come out of any congressional investigation of the CIA's internal operations will not be wholly new, apparently, since Senator Sam J. Ervin, Jr., the chairman of the Senate's Watergate committee, has said his committee received information about this in 1973 but did not consider itself authorized to pursue it. Not only did the Nixon administration set up the CIA to exercise internal surveillance, said Ervin in an interview, but also it set up a special unit in the Internal Revenue Service to spy on dissident groups.

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UNDER THE 1947 ACT which created it, the CIA is forbidden to have "police, subpoena, law enforcement powers or internal security functions" inside the United States. This is sufficiently categorical to be clear, yet it is stated by the New York Times reporter that his investigation has established the fact that intelligence files on at least 10,000 American citizens were maintained by a special unit of the CIA reporting to its then director, Richard Helms, now Ambassador to Iran.

This country can survive the damage done to its good name from time to time by the CIA in the foreign fields of its cloak and dagger activity, but it could not survive as a free society for long if the CIA were permitted to install its clandestine apparatus within the country. All the confirmation needed for such a statement is to be found in a reading of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's "The Gulag Archipelago."