

Triumph and Defeat: The C.I.A. Record

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WASHINGTON, June 10—The Central Intelligence Agency, that bewildering mixture of espionage and sabotage, is for the most part held firmly below the surface of public consciousness by the national security statutes, which prevent the slightest disclosure of its size, shape or intentions.

Periodically, however, one of the mooring lines frays and breaks and sends a part of the agency bobbing into full view, generally to the embarrassment of the C.I.A. and the rest of the Government as well.

The most recent such unintended revelations are the news accounts of the C.I.A.'s involvement in undercover surveillance activities at home and assassination plots abroad, accounts that led to the just-completed inquiry of the Rockefeller Commission, whose final report was issued today.

Kennedy Words Recalled

The sting that the C.I.A. will doubtless feel from the commission's findings, however, is by no means unique in its 28-year history. President Kennedy underscored that point on Nov. 28, 1961, when he told an audience of C.I.A. employes with a touch of sympathy in his voice, "Your successes are unheralded—your failures trumpeted."

There have been many of both since 1947, when the C.I.A. was established by the National Security Act as the nation's clearinghouse for information obtained from around the world, by overt and covert means. The information was needed by the highly specialized agencies of the Federal Government.

Mr. Kennedy's remarks, however, had a special poignancy, for they came seven months after the failure, loudly trumpeted, of the most ambitious operation then conceived by the intelligence agency—the invasion of Cuba by a ragtag band of exiled anti-Castro Cubans who were set ashore at dawn on April 15, 1961, on the beaches of the Bay of Pigs.

In May of the previous year, an American high-altitude reconnaissance aircraft called the U-2 was brought down over Sverdlovsk in the Soviet heartland.

Admission Put Off

But although the plane, which had been photographing Russian military installations, was flown by a civilian pilot under contract to the C.I.A., the agency managed to avoid a public admission of its operational role in the affair until more than three years later.

In the years before the Bay of Pigs debacle, the C.I.A., its various divisions and sections hidden away in an unprepossessing collection of Government buildings, was able to maintain an almost invisible presence in Washington, free from both scandal and honor.

Little was written about the agency, either with or without its blessing. Its top officials were known to and courted by a select group of Washington reporters, but the tidbits the agency handed out, which usually illuminated develop-

ments in the Communist world, were rarely attributed publicly to their true source.

In the early cold-war years, it was believed that the nation needed a single system that could collect and evaluate peacetime intelligence from a variety of sources and deal, at the same time, with the increasingly aggressive Communist intelligence services—if necessary, on their own terms.

The C.I.A.'s task, it was generally conceded, was one that needed doing, and its well-bred and Ivy-educated officials were left almost without supervision to do it in their own way.

A New Headquarters

In 1961, the year of the Cuban invasion, the C.I.A. moved lock, stock and cloak into what was—for a semisecret agency—unusually visible, futuristic glass-and-concrete headquarters in Langley, Va., across the Potomac River from the Capital.

Perhaps as an outgrowth of those two events—one reinforcing the agency's public identity and the other calling its judgment into question—the comfortable, if clandestine, niche that the C.I.A. had carved out for itself became a topic of growing interest and inquiry.

Since its inception in 1947, the agency had been accused almost daily of propping up foreign political parties, interfering with foreign elections and inspiring bribery, bombings, kidnappings and murders in countries around the globe.

In many instances, the charges were merely the unfounded suspicions of the C.I.A.'s adversaries; in others, they were subsequently proved true. In any case, they were invariably dismissed as unworthy of a response.

But as the hostility between the West and East that had marked the nineteen-fifties began to fade, so did the public's acceptance of the C.I.A. and its appointed mission of guarding against the Communist peril.

By the mid-nineteen sixties, the first hazy outlines had begun to emerge of the C.I.A.'s interconnections with some of the major political and social institutions in this country and abroad. Then came the disclosures that the C.I.A., or at least its emissaries and its unaccounted-for dollars, had in the two intervening decades seemingly permeated every facet of American life—business, finance, journalism, academia, local government, unions and even the arts.

Unlike most of the charges of subversion abroad, these disclosures were substantiated.

The C.I.A., it was learned, had arranged with Michigan State University to provide "deep cover" support for agency operatives in Vietnam during the previous decade.

Through a maze of private foundations of varying degrees of legitimacy, it had helped to fund the activities of the National Student Association, the American Newspaper Guild, the respected literary magazine Encounter and scores of other enterprises, respectable and dubious alike.

Accounts emerged of the

C.I.A.'s agreements with American multinational corporations that had sometimes allowed agency operatives to pose as their employes and more often involved the exchange of economic and even political intelligence between agency officials and widely traveled business executives.

What was not known at the time, but was discovered later, was that some three dozen American journalists stationed abroad were employed by the C.I.A. as undercover informants, and that the agency was training the members of a dozen local police forces in this country in the handling of explosives and detection of wiretaps.

Allegations Confirmed

Meanwhile, some of the allegations of C.I.A. interference in the affairs of other nations were being supported or confirmed.

In 1965, for example, the State Department finally conceded the truth of a five-year-old charge by Lee Kuan Yew, the Prime Minister of Singapore, that a C.I.A. agent had offered him a \$3.3-million bribe to cover up an unsuccessful agency operation in that country.

Some of the less well-publicized disclosures, such as the expenditure, previously denied, by the C.I.A. of several hundred million dollars to support the anti-Communist propagandizing of Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, were overshadowed by the revelation that the agency had waged a covert, multimillion dollar effort to destroy the effectiveness of Chile's Marxist President, Salvador Allende Gossens.

The C.I.A.'s involvement in the Vietnam war resulted in Operation Phoenix, inspired by the C.I.A. and put into effect by the South Vietnamese Army. It resulted in the deaths of more than 20,000 "suspected" members of the "Vietcong infrastructure" and allegedly in the torture of others.

Antiwar Demonstrations

It was a domestic adjunct to the Vietnam war, the public demonstrations of opposition that periodically arose in most of the nation's major cities—that was largely responsible for the scrutiny that the C.I.A. has undergone by the Rockefeller Commission and that will be continued by two Congressional committees.

The C.I.A., the commission reported today, inserted its operatives and informants into domestic antiwar groups and maintained an "excessive" number of dossiers—more than 7,000—on persons whom it believed were associated with political dissidents, foreign powers or both.

The Rockefeller Commission also investigated, but did not publicly report on, what may prove to be the greatest embarrassment in the C.I.A.'s history—the now apparently substantiated reports that the agency attempted to murder Premier Fidel Castro of Cuba and possibly other foreign leaders.

A Senate investigating committee, headed by Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, is inquiring into that topic.