

High-Level Murder



Jack Anderson

SPIRO AGNEW resurfaced the other day to warn against revoking the Central Intelligence Agency's writ to assassinate foreign VIPs. He doesn't want high-level murder to get out of hand, mind you, but regards it as "an extreme option that we should keep."

At the same time, members of Congress, administration spokesmen and even some editorialists have denounced congressional committees for publicizing the CIA's homicidal intrigues. There are signs that the committees are backing off and pulling their punches.

Some of the critics oppose washing our blood-stained linen in public because it hinders intelligence gathering and alienates people around the world who might look askance upon government gangsterism.

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OTHERS CONTENT that the CIA must operate at the same subterranean level as the KGB; that we must confront the Communists; that we must give our officials secret authority to play the dirty game, trusting to do the right thing.

The trouble with such sentiments is that they are unAmerican. Literally. They simply cannot be squared with four fundamental assumptions upon which the American system was constructed:

(1) Officialdom, left to itself, will

tend to do wrong, not right; (2) powers not rigidly limited and regularly inspected will be used against our people as well as others; (3) secret, unaccountable powers must be forbidden to government, particularly the power to commit crimes; and (4) should one branch usurp such powers, the others are duty-bound to expose and restrain it.

Is it possible that, only 16 months after the Watergate climax, these homely truisms must be relearned?

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MANY of the top officials, who should have known what was going on, insist they were unaware of the murderous CIA conspiracies. If this is true, it was essential for the press and Congress to expose the CIA plots if only so that those in charge of the CIA could learn about them and stop them.

But if the claims of high ignorance are false and an attempt has been made to deceive the American people in perpetuity, then those Presidents and intelligence chiefs turn out to be liars or perjurers — a confirmation of the ancient warning of the Founding Fathers that a people dare not entrust secret powers to any ruler, because all rulers are corruptible by power.

America is weakened by concealment of official wrongdoing and strengthened by its exposure.

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