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The CIA Mess and How It Can Be Cleaned Up

By Walter Lippmann

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THE CENTRAL Intelligence Agency problem is embarrassing and it is a disagreeable subject to talk about. But it is so important that we cannot sweep it under the rug and try to forget about it.

For the good faith of the United States Government has been compromised by the disclosures, and whether or not we like to think about it, we cannot conduct the affairs of the U.S. in a cloud of suspicion. We must dispel the suspicion and restore confidence in our good faith.

We may begin by noting that the cloud of suspicion is much wider than the actual operations of the CIA could possibly warrant. Anyone with experience in the outer world must realize that the CIA is almost automatically suspected of being implicated in or of being the prime mover in all manner of happenings abroad.

It would be no exaggeration to say that outside the United States the CIA has become the universal scapegoat for any rightist activity which people on the left and in the center dislike. The CIA has acquired a legendary character and its activities are rather like the exploits of Superman.

The CIA legend feeds on the fact that the agency has in fact done somewhere some of the things it is accused of doing everywhere all the time.

It has overturned governments in Iran and Guatemala. It has organized an invasion of a foreign country in the Bay of Pigs. In the old days it interfered with money in elections in France and Italy. It has subsidized the foreign activities of students, scholars, journalists, churchmen, labor leaders; it has paid for radio stations and magazines abroad.

Although these operations have been visible enough, they have been financed se-

cretly. The secrecy has prevented reliable knowledge as to where the real CIA activities end and where the suspected and imaginary ones begin.

In this way the cloud of suspicion has been generated which envelops so large a part of American action in the rest of the world.

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WE MAY GO on to note that the Americans are the only people who have not shared in this general suspicion. There have, of course, been charges and exposures made by minorities on the American left and right. But until recently the great majority have taken for granted the purity of the government's motives and the innocence of its actions.

The secrecy of the operation shielded it from suspicion in this country, and with very little questioning and argument Congress has voted secret funds of unknown size for which there is no public accounting.

If we push deeper into the matter we find, I believe, that the root of the trouble is that the Central Intelligence Agency has been used for much more than genuine intelligence work. It has been used as a propaganda agency, as a superior diplomatic foreign service, as an agency for clandestine intervention in foreign countries. The breadth of the CIA's authorized activities has not only generated the cloud of suspicion over American action abroad but it has spoiled the CIA as an intelligence agency here at home.

The prime example of this was the fiasco of the Bay of Pigs. In that affair the CIA organized an invasion of Cuba. As an intelligence agency, however, it was supposed to advise the President about the prospects of the invasion and the probable reaction of the Cubans.

Because the CIA men who were running the invasion had also to advise the President on its prospects, their optimism got the better of

their intelligence and the President received wholly wrong advice. Thus he was led into a disaster which very nearly wrecked the Kennedy Administration at the outset.

After the Bay of Pigs, President Kennedy was urged to cut the CIA apart, separating sharply the business of intelligence from the business of propaganda and intervention. Inhappily, President Kennedy did not take this advice and, after a little tinkering with personnel and with the details, he left intact the secret conglomeration which is known as CIA.

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THERE WILL be and there can be no solution to the problem, I believe, unless there is a surgical operation which separates true intelligence work from the whole clutter of other activities. An intelligence agency should deal with espionage, research and analysis.

The other activities, propaganda, intervention and dirty tricks should not be in the intelligence agency. They should not be under the same roof, they should not be manned by the same men and they should not be under the same cloak of secrecy.

There is little doubt that this will improve the integrity of the true intelligence work. What will it do to the other operations if they are divorced from the CIA as a secret intelligence agency?

Secret propaganda would be abolished. This would make more credible open and avowed propaganda. By taking the business of intervening in foreign countries out of the CIA, the temptation to intervene will be diminished. This would in itself be a good thing, and in the rare cases where intervention was a vital necessity, it could be set up secretly enough in the Defense Department.

As to the dirty tricks, like bribing a politician somewhere abroad, the American Republic will survive if such dirty tricks are not performed.