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SECRET 1948 ROLE DISCLOSED BY U.S.

NYTimes

Documents Reveal Truman Backed Covert Anti-Red Activities in Italy

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Feb. 11—The State Department has just published documents showing that President Harry S. Truman was so concerned over a possible Communist take-over in Italy in 1948 that he approved a secret recommendation that the United States "make full use of its political, economic, and if necessary, military power" to prevent it.

The latest volume of documents in the series "The Foreign Relations of the United States" contains National Security Council reports that were designed to help the pro-Western Government of Premier Alcide de Gasperi turn back the Communists in the elections of April, 1948.

The volume does not indicate what, if any, role was played by the new formed Central Intelligence Agency in carrying out the recommendations.

Other, nonofficial publications have reported that the agency was authorized to help finance the political and information campaigns of anti-Communist forces in this period.

There are unexplained deletions in the National Security Council reports, as published by the State Department volume, that suggest they may refer to these secret activities.

Specific Steps Deleted

One report, dated Feb. 10, 1948, lists eight recommendations. The fifth, ending with a deletion, says; "Actively combatting communist propaganda in Italy by an effective U.S. information program and by all other practicable means [rest of sentence deleted]."

Another report, dated March 8, recommends "efforts by all feasible means [deletion] to detach the Italian left-wing Socialists from the Communists.

The same report recommends, with an additional deletion: "Continue to assist the Christian Democrats and other selected anti-Communist parties [deletion]."

William M. Franklin, director of the State Department's Historical Office, was asked whether the deletions were about clandestine activities. He declined to discuss what had been deleted.

He did volunteer, however, the following in answer to questions in discussions with the State Department's outside advisory panel on the foreign relations series:

"It has been agreed that we cannot cover in the foreign relations series, clandestine operations, covert intelligence reports or any matters having to do with secret weapons or nuclear programs other than those that could be specifically declassified."

Mr. Franklin said that this policy was agreed upon so that crucial documents that might otherwise be denied publication could be published, albeit with deletions.

Other Agencies Involved

The State Department's foreign relations volumes used to be almost entirely based on the department's documents. But in the postwar period, the National Security Council, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department and other agencies have begun to play important roles in foreign affairs.

This required that the editors obtain clearance from the agencies for the publication of documents.

Walter F. Lafeber, professor of history at Cornell University, who is chairman of the advisory committee for the foreign relations volumes, said in an interview that "the real problem is that the National Security Council is being very sticky about releasing documents."

This, in turn, he said, has delayed publication of the series, which is now up to 1948.

Agencies can refuse to allow publication of a document for up to 30 years old if it contains "information or material disclosing a system, plan, installation or specific foreign relations matter, the continuing protection of which is essential to the national security." In addition, refusal can be based on the ground of "disclosing intelligence sources or methods."

Grounds For Longer Delay

If a document is more than 30 years old, it can still be denied publication if the department concerned decides that "continued protection of the records is essential to national security."

Historians of the postwar period are seeking to establish the role of the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies to understand how American foreign policy was made and carried out.

In Italy, for instance, the C.I.A. has been reported to have played a significant role as part of the American effort in 1948 to support the de Gasperi Government.

In the latest issue of Foreign Affairs Quarterly, for instance Harry Rositzke, a former C.I.A. official, said:

In 1948, spurred by the Communist take-over in Czechoslovakia and the Italian political crisis, the National Security Council gave the C.I.A. the responsibility for "political, psychological, economic and unconventional warfare operations."