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CIA Funding Journalistic

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The Central Intelligence Agency secretly created over 25 years and still finances a vast journalistic network outside the United States that is available to carry out covert propaganda campaigns.

Made up of journalist agents, subsidized newspapers, radio stations and international wire and news services, the network is one of the less-publicized tools in the agency's covert arsenal.

Its purpose, according to a former top CIA official, "is to disseminate data about the foreign world, particularly the Soviet Union, that is being suppressed . . . and to do it in a way favorable to U.S. strategic interests."

A glimpse of how the CIA network operates was contained in a recent report of the Senate intelligence committee.

On Sept. 14, 1970, according to the Senate report, the "Forty Committee" of the National Security Council authorized a covert CIA propaganda operation to focus attention on "the damage that would befall Chile under an Allende government." Salvador Allende, a leftist, was then a candidate for president of Chile.

Less than one week later, an Inter-American Press Association news release was issued in Washington charging that freedom of the press was being jeopardized in Chile by "the Communists and their Marxist allies."

The release, according to the Senate report, was a CIA product "through its covert action resources."

Jim Canel, executive secretary of the association

who usually writes such releases, said recently he first learned of the release when he was called about it by the Associated Press.

Canel at the time "assumed" the release was drafted by Agustin Edwards, publisher and owner of El Mercurio, an anti-Allende Santiago newspaper.

In September, 1970, Edwards came to Washington to generate U.S. support for a plan to halt Allende's election. On Sept. 15, the day after the Forty Committee approval of the propaganda campaign, Edwards met with then CIA Director Richard M. Helms.

On Sept. 22, Edwards' El Mercurio carried an editorial arguing that "retention of individual freedom" was the most important matter facing the Chilean people.

Twelve days after the Forty Committee action, the Spanish government-owned wire service, EFE, carried a report throughout Latin America from Santiago on an anti-Allende rally by a right-wing group called Patria y Libertad which was described in the story as "a growing . . . movement."

The same day, a Santiago radio station carried a political commentary on the Patria rally. The commentator mentioned the rally favorably while criticizing the Christian Democratic party which that day had offered to make an agreement with Allende.

According to the Senate committee report, Patria y Libertad and its rally received some money in an "indirect subsidy" from the CIA. The radio station in Santiago and the commentator also received CIA funds.

EFE, which transmits in Spanish, at the time received a CIA subsidy for its Latin American newswire operations, according to a former intelligence official.

Within a month of the Forty Committee decision, 18 journalists from outside Chile under direct or indirect agency control had arrived in Santiago. Some were paid CIA agents working for newspapers in other countries; a few were anti-Allende and had received their transportation from CIA funds.

Others were journalists who had been ordered to Chile by their bosses who were described by the Senate committee report as "high-level (CIA) agents . . . in managerial capacities in the media field."

One interview with Allende was written by a correspondent of Latin, in 1970 a new Spanish-language wire service. Latin purportedly was established and run by a group of 13 Latin American newspapers which had hired the British news agency Reuters to manage the operation.

According to a former intelligence agent, however, the CIA subsidized Latin through intermediaries in much the same manner as it gave money to El Mercurio.

Francisco Baker, deputy general manager of Latin in Buenos Aires said in a telephone interview that it was "absolutely false" that his service was directly subsidized by the CIA.

A spokesman for Reuters in Washington said he had never heard that CIA money had gone into Latin. Reuters, he said, had con-

tracted to manage the Spanish-language service, but had nothing to do with its financing.

Despite CIA's covert action and propaganda efforts, Allende was elected president of Chile in October, 1970. According to the Senate committee report, the CIA claimed its six-week propaganda blitz resulted in "726 articles, broadcasts, editorials and similar items" in Latin American and European media.

After Allende took office, the CIA covert propaganda operation continued. Some \$1.5 million went directly to El Mercurio.

Material was developed and placed in all newspapers that opposed Allende and radio and television stations as well.

After the 1973 Chilean coup in which Allende was killed, CIA's covert propaganda operations continued, though at a lower level.

The 1970 CIA Chile propaganda operation was an unusual "blitz" according to an agency official who participated in it. "With the White House really leaning on us," he recalled, "you take advantage of every asset you have."

According to a Senate staff presentation, "propaganda and manipulation of the press" were the first covert actions undertaken by the agency when it was organized in 1947.

By 1953, according to the same report, CIA had covert operations including propaganda campaigns under way in 50 countries.

The Senate Chile report gives examples of media operations during the 1950s and 1960s.

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Network Abroad

A CIA-subsidized political radio commentator organized a march on the Soviet embassy in 1968 at the time of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. A riot took place. It was then covered by a CIA-subsidized wire service which carried the story around the world.

After 1968, a CIA agent at El Mercurio "exerted substantial control over the content of that paper's international news section," according to the Senate committee report.

News "harmful to the United States, particularly about Vietnam" was "suppressed," the report says, while other CIA-paid journalists "wrote articles or editorials favorable to U.S. interests in the world."

Former CIA top officials say similar activities were undertaken in countries throughout the world. Justifying such operations, one former official said recently, "if we give up this program, we lose a network of agents of influence."