

NYTimes
No Spring List From the C.I.A.

APR 12 1977

The report that the Central Intelligence Agency is no longer secretly underwriting English-language books seems reliable, even though it comes at secondhand from Representative Don Edwards of California. The agency's policy in such matters is neither to confirm nor deny, but a spokesman acknowledges as "public information" the fact that the C.I.A. has over the years secretly produced, subsidized or collaborated on hundreds of books and periodicals, many of which wound up in the United States. He is not able to say exactly what it is doing at present along these lines or what it will be doing in the future.

Now, C.I.A. employees are, of course, not supposed to discuss matters that come under the heading of "sources and methods," but the agency ought, at the very least, to take pains that no piece of writing that it has a hand in producing for covert purposes finds its way into general circulation on these shores. Spreading propaganda in this country is not part of the C.I.A. assignment, as it implicitly and belatedly acknowledged in 1967, when its Deputy Director for Plans was obliged by embarrassing revelations to announce, "We will

under no circumstances publish books, magazines or newspapers in the United States."

That assurance has proved to be inadequate. Even if the C.I.A. keeps hands off American publications, foreign publications have a way of getting here. Such, for example, was the fate of a book entitled "Chile's Marxist Experiment," which first appeared in England in 1973, with tangible inspiration from the C.I.A. That attack on the Allende Government was subsequently distributed by a New York publisher who claimed not to be aware of the C.I.A. connection. Certainly the book's readers were not aware of it.

The Senate Committee on Intelligence is now in a position to check on whether the C.I.A. has in fact stopped putting out works in English, but we infer that it will continue to be involved with publishing material in other languages. That may at times be in this nation's interest, but as things stand now, American readers cannot be sure that the result will not turn up among them in translation as a work of pure scholarship or independent journalism. The matter deserves a close reading by the Senate committee.