

**TOP SECRET**  
**SECURITY INFORMATION**

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**THE PRESIDENT'S COMMITTEE**  
**ON**  
**INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION ACTIVITIES**  
**REPORT TO THE PRESIDENT**

**June 30, 1953**

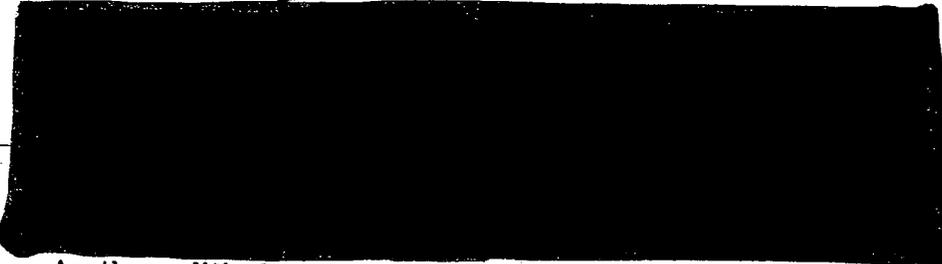
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**TOP SECRET**

## Chapter Six

### COVERT OPERATIONS WITHIN THE FREE WORLD

For five years after the end of World War II, governments of non-communist nations, especially in Western Europe, were subjected to strong pressure from communist minorities. Many of these governments had communist cabinet members and were incapable of strong action against communist groups. Nearly all had communists in key administrative positions. Independent covert action by the United States frequently offered the only possible method of strengthening national anti-communist forces. For considerations both of security and policy it was generally impossible for the United States to work with and trust those governments which were under the heaviest communist attack. Because of this special situation and also because there existed a basic and continuing need for a covert arm of government capable of conducting certain activities abroad which could not be acknowledged as officially sponsored, an office of covert operations was established within the Central Intelligence Agency in 1948.\*



As the political and economic recovery in Western Europe permits, some reduction of CIA's covert activities in this area will be possible. In addition, European governments or private groups may be induced to assume, either independently or jointly with American agencies, responsibility for some of the political action programs now being carried on by CIA. This would mean that CIA would lose much of its direct control over these activities. The Committee believes, however, that such direct control must in many cases be relinquished or relaxed if serious political complications are to be avoided.

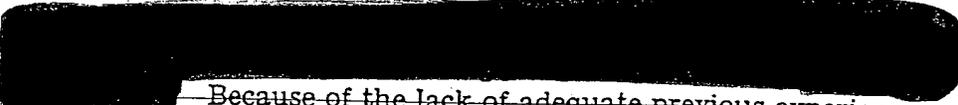
\* NSC 10/2; see also Chapter Seven, p. 97.

\*\* Excluding covert operations undertaken solely to support overt military forces in wartime.

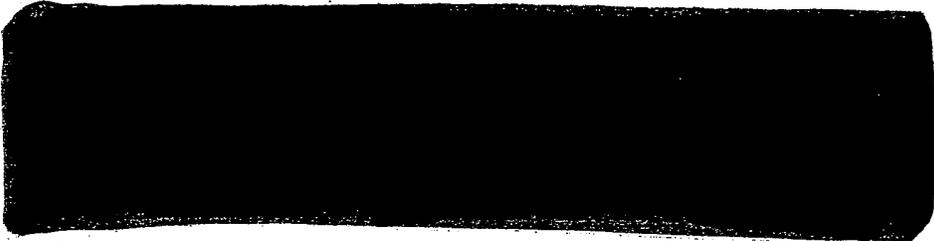
The critical countries of South and Southeast Asia and of Africa have presented very great obstacles to the conduct of covert as well as overt activities. Successful covert operations can be developed only over a long period. The Committee believes that these areas should receive a higher priority than they now enjoy with respect to assignment of key personnel and development of expanded covert capabilities for future activities.



Covert operations have supported a large number of foreign political organizations throughout the free world, particularly in Western Europe, in order to make them more effective instruments against communist subversion. In a parallel effort, attempts have also been made to establish covert influence directly over key individuals and groups in foreign governments. Such political activities have the great advantage that they permit the United States covertly to influence developments in other countries in the interest of the United States to a degree which can not be accomplished overtly. They have the disadvantage that they entail a risk of exposure which may result in damage to United States interests.



Because of the lack of adequate previous experience in the field of peacetime covert operations, and because quickly mounted operations were needed to meet serious threats of communist advance in 1948 and 1949, some of the initial operations suffered from hasty improvisation. They did, however, assist materially in countering communist subversion during this critical period. The experience gained is now of value in establishing more effective controls over current activities and in balancing the advantages and disadvantages of continuing them on a covert basis.



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[REDACTED]

As a result of experience gained in the last four years, and because of major changes within the free world during this period, certain basic modifications in present concepts of covert activities should now be made. Free world governments are becoming increasingly unwilling to tolerate independent American activities [REDACTED] CIA activities to which foreign governments closed their eyes in 1948 can today become the basis either for official protests to the United States, or if publicly exposed, for a wave of popular indignation against American "intervention".

Because of the size and complexity of many covert projects, large numbers of people [REDACTED] are familiar with them.

[REDACTED]

CIA covert support to several major activities has recently been reported in the American press.\* Such reports can destroy the effectiveness [REDACTED] and can also be interpreted as an attempt by American intelligence agencies to take over and control [REDACTED] for reasons totally inconsistent with professed American ideals. Under these circumstances, few foreigners would accept the view that the only objective is to strengthen free world institutions against communist subversion. Unlike the communists, whose political code admits the necessity for subversion, the strength of the American position abroad is dependent upon the voluntary association of foreign nations [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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