

SUGGESTED REPLY

In a letter to the editor, published in The Branding Iron of April 23, 1971, Mr. Allen Ginsberg asks my comments on some allegations contained in a recent issue of Ramparts Magazine which, in Mr. Ginsberg's words, allege "that our government's Central Intelligence Agency has been for decades subsidizing the main opium traffickers of 83 per cent of the world's illegal supply in Indochina," and "that the CIA did actually subsidize main opium traffickers in Indochina as part of our political policy."

Having thoroughly investigated these allegations, I can state categorically that they are completely unfounded. As recently as 14 April of this year, the Director of Central Intelligence stated in an address to the American Society of Newspaper Editors:

"There is the arrant nonsense, for example, that the Central Intelligence Agency is somehow involved in the world drug traffic. We are not. As fathers, we are as concerned about the lives of our children and grandchildren as are all of you. As an Agency, in fact, we are heavily engaged in tracing the foreign roots of the drug traffic for the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs. We hope we are helping with a solution; we know we are not contributing to the problem."

The Central Intelligence Agency is directly accountable to the President, through the National Security Council which is privy to all of its activities; it is subject to the scrutiny of the Office of Management and Budget, which oversees its expenditures; to the President's Foreign

Intelligence Advisory Board, made up of distinguished private citizens; and to four Committees of the Congress, to whom it reports on all its activities. To suppose that in these circumstances the Agency could conduct the activities alleged in the Ramparts article without the knowledge or approval of any of these authorities to which it is responsible, or that any of these authorities would sanction such activity, is the ultimate in absurdity.

Turning to some of the more specific allegations in the Ramparts article, it is worth noting that:

a. So far as opium entering the U.S. is concerned, recent studies indicate that perhaps only about 5% of the illegal imports come from all of Southeast Asia, the remainder originating mainly in the Middle East.

b. Roland Paul, a former investigator for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee who made a study of the area last year, writes in the April issue of Foreign Affairs that "in passing it may be interesting to note that because of their long association with the American agency (CIA), the hill tribes have shifted their agricultural emphasis from opium to rice," a conclusion which can be solidly documented from other authoritative sources.

c. In fact efforts of American agencies to discourage opium growing among these hill tribes has produced a North Vietnamese propaganda campaign encouraging and applauding the raising of opium poppies. This campaign contrasts the Communist-controlled areas where the population can "make our living as we wish" by raising opium to the lot of those under "imperialist domination" who are restrained from doing so. (In view of his concern, perhaps Mr. Ginsberg would like to raise the matter with the authorities in Hanoi.)

In sum, I can assure you that the allegations in question are completely false and that no U.S. Government agency operating in Southeast Asia has approved, supported, or condoned illegal drug production or traffic. On the contrary, these U.S. Government agencies are all cooperating in efforts to discourage opium production and distribution and these efforts have had at least some success.