

STAT

A Modest Proposal: Abolish the Damn Thing

A Comment by Stanley Plastrik

There is little I see to quarrel with in Irving Howe's original statement on the CIA and students (March-April DISSENT) or with Lewis Coser's forceful statement published above. I would only call attention to the disappointing fact that too many of the NSA leaders have tried to brazen their way through the moral jungle into which they have wandered, while others have failed to grasp what was wrong in their action. Certainly, the least one might have expected was some gesture on their part—a mass resignation of the NSA officers and executive board, for example, or that the whole issue be submitted to discussion in the form of an emergency national convention that might elect a new leadership.

I wish to discuss briefly a somewhat different side of the question—namely, the failure of most people to grasp what, precisely, the CIA is. The sensational side of the revelations has distorted this and given the impression that its main activity revolves around the feeding of money to various organizations with the aim of subverting them to CIA purposes. I submit that this is a minor part—one-tenth of the submerged iceberg—of the CIA. It is such misunderstanding which leads, for instance, to such feeble conclusions as those contained in a *New Republic* editorial (March 4, 1967). After detailing the, by now, well-known instances of CIA payments, use of conduits, etc., the editorial concludes:

There is nothing evil in working for the Central Intelligence Agency. Many who have taken Agency money to do what they believed needed doing are not villains. The results have not been all bad and were often good—and would have been just as good, or better, if the financing had been open and above-board. . . .

If this is true, why all the fuss? Clearly, the author of these naive comments hasn't much notion of what the CIA is all about.

In a column entitled "Inside the CIA," Washington correspondent Drew Pearson showed he understood much more about the real nature—the nine-tenths—of the CIA. He understands that the CIA engages in activities beyond our borders which would be considered highly immoral and bordering on the criminal if done within our borders; that the agency operates as a state within a state under the direction of "faceless men."

In its insatiable quest for "intelligence," the CIA has supported many corrupt and unpopular politicians around the world. Their political operations have received CIA financing actually as payment for "intelligence."

There is also an impatience inside the CIA with sophisticated diplomacy, a lack of understanding of the social ferment which is building up steam in many underdeveloped countries. Some CIA men have difficulty distinguishing, say, between a democratic Socialist and a Marxist Communist.

The *New York Times* estimates the CIA's annual (secret) budget at half a billion. Since the CIA was established 20 years ago, this comes to a total of \$20 billion. Is it conceivable that more than 10 per cent (\$200 million) has been spent on the activities revealed to the public thus far? 90 per cent of its budget remains unaccounted for. Deducting operating expenses still leaves billions spent overseas in political actions. This is the real CIA.

The 1949 CIA Act says its director may spend money ". . . without regard to the provisions of law and regulations relating to the expenditure of government funds." He does this on a voucher certified by him alone. Nor does the CIA report to Congress or to any federal department; it is an independent agency, responsible only to the President. It does, however, give some (limited) information about its activities to a select group of sympathetic congressmen.

The CIA has had its own significant internal evolution in the 20 years since it was set up. Until World War II, intelligence work was carried on by the armed services and the State Department who employed agents—"spies who came in from the cold"—at so much per head. During the war, intelligence mushroomed into a huge and complicated affair, most notably centered in the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). With the Cold War, all intelligence functions outside of those strictly military were lumped together in 1947 into the new agency, the CIA. Thus, the CIA is the creation of the Cold War. It was the government's answer to Stalin's revived Comintern and aggressive Communist activity. It became a *political arm* (as often as not, *the* political arm) of the Administration. It initiated and conceived policy (Bay of Pigs). President Truman wrote in 1963 that it had become "a symbol of sinister and mysterious foreign intrigue—and a subject for Cold War enemy propaganda." He urged that its operation be halted immediately and its role be limited to the evaluation of information.

There is not a single country in the world today without a CIA presence. Its "vanguard" operators in overseas spy roles are active interventionists in political struggles in every corner of the globe: as-

assination, bribery, sabotage and subversion, political intervention at all levels. The record of their activities includes Cuba (Bay of Pigs); Guatemala; the Dominican Republic; Iran (ousting of the late premier Mossadegh); the Congo; Vietnam; etc., etc. The history of our time is impossible to understand without reference to the CIA; it is a force with its own momentum and influence on events. Behind the relatively small percentage of CIA "vanguard" operatives stands a vast, logistical array of research and scientific personnel and a dazzling computer and monitoring system; but this exists basically for the guidance and feeding of the CIA "activists." The role of the CIA cannot be separated from its use in American aggressive interventionist policy. Never before have we had anything like the CIA; it cannot be separated from the turn toward belligerence, interventionism, expansionism. Properly understood, the CIA cannot be separated from an analysis of American foreign policy and the role which Administration leaders have cast for the country on a global scale.

If this view is correct, then it follows that our opposition to the CIA is much more fundamental than opposition to its criminal activity in subverting American domestic movements and organizations. It becomes part and parcel of our opposition to present American political policy throughout the world. For my part, the only possible stand one can hold regarding the CIA is to propose its immediate termination, its abolition, and the cessation of all its activities. What of the "normal" gathering of intelligence and information? The answer is quite simple: send the spies out into the cold again; remove them from the warm, sheltering arms of the CIA headquarters. In short, return the formation of both domestic and foreign policy back to the proper institutions of government.

THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE

"When his former speechwriter, Richard Goodwin, accused the White House of deceiving the public on the war in Vietnam (Address to National ADA Convention, September 17, calling for a "National Committee Against Widening The War"), Mr. Johnson is reported to have commented: "It's like being bitten by your own dog."

—Charles Bartlett, "In Washington,"
The Arizona Republic, 10/3/66.