

## Fact: CIA alliance with the drug traffic

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**THE POLITICS OF HEROIN IN SOUTHEAST ASIA**, by Alfred W. McCoy (Harper & Row, \$10.95).

By Keyes Beech

**H**EROIN didn't always have a bad name. Around the turn of the century it was hailed as a "miracle drug" and approved by the AMA for general use. In fact, it didn't even have a name until Germany's Bayer chemical combine invented "Heroin" as a brand name and put it on the market as a cough medicine.

But this fascinating bit of drug lore is only incidental to the central theme of this devastating book: that because of its commitment to contain communism in Southeast Asia, the U.S. government helped create a generation of junkies.

SOUTHEAST Asia's "Golden Triangle" — where Laos, Thailand and Burma meet — has

been an opium-growing area for centuries. But what McCoy and his fellow authors are concerned about is how within the last 20 years the "triangle" has expanded its production until today it accounts for 70 per cent of the world's illicit supply of heroin.

For this the authors hold the United States responsible. They specifically charge that in their clandestine war against the Communists, U.S. agencies, notably the CIA, allied themselves with elements known to be engaged in the drug traffic; ignored and even covered up the activities of known drug traffickers, and allowed American military aircraft to be used to transport drugs.

The charges are difficult to refute because, in the main, they happen to be true. McCoy has done his homework. Critics may quarrel with some of his facts and dispute many of his judgments, but he con-



A G.I. snorts heroin in Vietnam.

vincingly demonstrates, for example, that the G.I. heroin epidemic in South Vietnam could not have happened without the active participation of greedy generals and government officials who owed their jobs to the United States.

U.S. involvement in the drug

traffic was, as the authors contend, an "inevitable consequence" of our involvement in Southeast Asia, where opium was a way of life. But it did not become an "American problem" until it touched American lives.

**THE BOOK** is not quite the scholarly work that it pretends to be. It is as much an indictment of the Vietnam war as it is a documentation of the drug traffic. The authors suggest that all will be well if President Nixon is defeated and the United States pulls out of Southeast Asia lock, stock and barrel.

Maybe so. But the sad thing is that the book's chief victims are a handful of dedicated CIA men who went to Southeast Asia to do a job. That job was to fight communism, not reform a society.

Keyes Beech is The Daily News' correspondent in Asia.

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## Fiction: An ex-CIA man's disputed thriller

**COMPANY MAN** by Joe Maggio (Putnam, \$6.95).

By George Harmon

**T**HE late Allen Dulles, quarterback of our World War II spies and later chief of the CIA, scoffed at the notion of the American diplomat or spy being a closed-mind blunderer too cynical to play by any rules but his own. He criticized such novels as Graham Greene's "The Quiet American" and Burdick and Lederer's "The Ugly American" for promoting "mischief-creating prejudices."

Dulles wrote that he preferred "taking the raw material which we find in America — naive, home-grown, even homespun — and training such a man to be a good intelligence officer, however long the process lasts." Those homespun

boys, if we are to believe recent news accounts, are traveling much farther afield than Dulles seemed willing to send them.

**THE BACKBONE** of CIA activity apparently remains the clandestine listening posts and purloined letters which Dulles so loved. But now the charge is often made that the CIA tries to foment change rather than merely report it; in Uganda, for example; in Chile, in Laos.

So much is being written about the CIA, in fact, that its argot is creeping into American slang: a spy is a spook, to kill is to "terminate with extreme prejudice."

Now arrives Joe Maggio, a mercenary-turned-writer, who says he worked off and on for the CIA in places like Africa and Laos.

His novel tells of Nick Mar-

tin, a sort of comic book superhero and former Green Beret. A "home-grown" boy whom Dulles would have liked, he is recruited off a Florida campus by "the Company" (in-group slang for the CIA), and works part time, training Bay of Pigs invaders and shooting up Africa and the Tonkin Gulf. There is enough bad writing to fill three pulp magazines ("steel split the air overhead").

**BUT MAGGIO'S** book has an aura of authenticity about it, and few readers know enough about the CIA to dispute him — even though the question already has been raised: Is Joe Maggio the Clifford Irving of the barracks set?

W. E. Colby, executive director of the CIA, disputes the publisher's contention that "Company Man" is "a novel of facts," proclaiming it a "law-

dry fabrication" filled with "lurid writing and innate contradictions." He denies that the CIA ever has carried out assassinations or has trafficked in drugs, as Maggio asserts.

Colby also says Maggio was "terminated for cause" during a six-month CIA training program and never went overseas for the CIA or undertook any of the "assignments" Maggio says he performed. But Maggio has obtained a government letter quoting the CIA as saying that he worked for the agency on contract.

In any event, Maggio writes enough like a soldier to convince the reader he has been one. He has produced an unprofessional but good example of thriller fiction.

George Harmon is a Daily News editor and writer.