

Date:

FOIAb3b

Amateur Hour In The CIA

Waved off with annoyance and disbelief by most Americans were recent stories from Moscow of American students and tourists being expelled from the Soviet Union as "spies." Yet the funny thing is that they probably were spies.

Last week a deputy assistant director of the Central Intelligence Agency in effect admitted as much during a talk with delegates to the American Bar Association convention in Washington. And a day later a young Chicago sales executive disclosed that he had been approached by somebody from the CIA to try a little amateur espionage during his ten days in Russia on an overseas tour.

The Chicagoan prudently declined. He did not think it right for a tourist to spy on the country he was visiting, he said, and he did not think it safe for an utter neophyte like himself to attempt so tricky a game anyway.

The CIA must have been disappointed by that reaction. From the newest Ivy League recruit in this most chic of bureaucracies to Director Allen Dulles himself, there is an air of bonny, innocent enthusiasm for the adventures to be had in a naughty but exciting world. However, if the young businessman refused to enter into the spirit of the thing, other I-spy hobbyists were found among U.S. tourists, and no doubt some of them are among the culprits about whom the Soviet press is growling.

For the enormous sums they put into the CIA, Americans deserve better than this. Moreover, the cliché about their congenital inaptitude for cloak-and-dagger activity won't do. They had a good thing in the wartime

Office of Strategic Services, of which the CIA is an outgrowth. Native Americans do very well, too, as FBI agents, Secret Servicemen, postal inspectors, narcotics agents, and (though on a reduced scale nowadays) military and naval intelligence operatives.

In short, amateurishness is not a necessary condition of our cloak-and-dagger operations. The ineptitude of the CIA may, indeed, be attributed in part to the fact that it alone among the services enumerated does not make professional competence of some kind a prerequisite for its personnel.

Along with dilletantism, the agency suffers from too much independence, since it is the only organization mentioned whose functions are not subordinate to larger agencies—e.g., the Departments of Justice, Treasury, Post Office, Army, and Navy. The CIA is financed by secret appropriations, which means that it is to all intents and purposes autonomous. Yet from the very beginning it has lacked the kind of shrewd, resourceful direction available to the other intelligence and investigative agencies—notably the FBI with its J. Edgar Hoover. Autonomy has enhanced inadequacies of a succession of politically appointed CIA chiefs, and at the same time it has screened a long series of blunders and mischances.

The only practical solution to this problem would seem to be the appointment of a CIA director equipped by training and temperament for one of the most exacting, onerous, and delicate jobs in the public service. It is to be hoped that the next President of the United States will have better luck than his predecessors in finding such a man.

CPYRIGHT

CPYRIGHT

Items in correspondence files
filed under "SPRINGFIELD SUN"