

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE 1PORTLAND OBSERVER (OR)
3 April 1985

FILE ONLY

Experts debate covert CIA actions

by Robert Lothian

Nasty covert actions are necessary to save democracy, according to Jack Stephenson, a former CIA official from St. Helens, Oregon.

But what the CIA is doing in Nicaragua and a host of other countries around the world is a form of "state-sponsored terrorism" said P.S.U. political science professor Gordon Schloming.

Stephenson and Schloming squared off at a World Affairs Council-sponsored debate on the ethics of U.S. secret involvement in toppling governments, rigging elections and other undercover operations.

Schloming cited a number of cases where, in his opinion, CIA activities went astray.

Covert operations in what was once the Congo in the 1960s contrib-

uted to the defeat of a national liberation struggle there and the assassination of African nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba, said Schloming.

Zaire was established in the Congo's place. Now Mobutu, Zaire's authoritarian president, is "starving half the country's people," according to Schloming.

In Angola, he said, 100,000 lives have been lost in the struggle by CIA-backed rightists to defeat the Angolan revolution.

Guatemala, Iran and Chile have had popularly-elected governments toppled as a result of CIA covert actions, said Schloming. Mexico, Indonesia, Pakistan, The Philippines and Australia have also been victimized by the CIA, he said.

In some cases, said Schloming,

"the same result took place as if we had not done a thing."

In Viet Nam, for example, he said, the national liberation movement led by Ho Chi Minh won anyway after nearly 20 years of covert actions and all-out war, billions of dollars wasted and over a million lives lost.

"You cannot create a genuine nationalism as an outside power," he said. "Ho Chi Minh was destined to rule."

Schloming said that on several occasions the CIA misled the American public in the interest of national security. He cited two false stories planted in the press by the CIA: the one about Libyan hit squads headed toward the U.S. and another about massacres in Angola carried out by Cuban soldiers.

In Nicaragua, the so-called CIA secret war there is "a weak substitute for foreign policy when the public will not support U.S. intervention," he said.

"It does not work to fight terrorism with terrorism," said Schloming.

But "not all the actors on the world stage are boy scouts," answered Stephenson. Democracy is under attack on all sides and faces defeat in a few short decades, according to Stephenson. Covert actions are necessary to defeat democracy's enemies, he said. "We have to do things we find repugnant. If we stay pure and clean, then democracy's fate will be decided."

"Without secrecy the operations almost certainly will fail."

Stephenson alluded to democracy's "inherent weaknesses," like free speech, which allows enemies to organize freely. He implied that it might be necessary to destroy democracy a little in order to save it.