

Intelligence in American Society

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE IN FULL
22 SEPT 93

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

The DCI speaks to the central problem of secret services in this democracy.

Richard Helms¹

The essence of what I have to say here lies in the extraordinary fact that a nation's director of intelligence is pleased to discuss his problems with a group of interested private citizens. In few other societies, present or past, would leading citizens have your sort of concern about national intelligence activities. In no other society would an intelligence officer recognize that private citizens have a legitimate interest in such things. For American intelligence today has responsibilities and problems that no other intelligence system has ever faced.

Its responsibilities grow from this nation's emergence as a superpower at the end of World War II; its problems grow from its efforts to meet those responsibilities in a nation technically at peace and belligerently free. Our intelligence system is in truth an expression of our society, with all its vigor and ingenuity, with all its complexity and some of its contradictions, as that society gropes for answers to challenges its founding fathers could never have conceived.

In particular, three great challenges of the postwar world have forced American intelligence to grow beyond its traditional and parochial realm of espionage into a much closer—and more uncomfortable—relationship with our society: First, the nuclear-tipped ICBM and its impact on war.

Second, electronic communications and their impact on the orderly conduct of government. Third, the "ideological imperialism" of the Soviet Union and its impact on American influence abroad.

Weapons

The ICBM is shorthand for the complex world of modern weaponry. This country is challenged by a Soviet Union almost its equal in technology and in the weight of resources channeled to the military arts. In the next decade it will be challenged by a China still far behind but able all the same to build nuclear weapons. To meet these challenges we must have intricate and incredibly expensive systems for defense and attack.

Moreover, we and the Soviets have a wide variety of choices we may take in what systems to develop, and these choices interact. The key is knowledge, knowledge of what accuracy and reliability the Soviets are building into their ICBMs, knowledge of Soviet progress with advanced radars, knowledge of Soviet knowledge of our own progress. Without this knowledge there can be no rational planning of our own prodigiously costly defense effort.

This is a difficult year in Washington, for we are in for another of those political-military-economic struggles over weaponry which try men's patience, integrity, and souls. In the thirties there was the carrier-versus-battleship fight, a few years later bomber-versus-carrier, then missile-versus-bomber, and now the biggest of them all: missile versus anti-missile. Or more exactly, whether to spend many billions on building a defense system against the ICBM.

We have learned, and Secretary McNamara has publicly stated, that the Soviets are building two defensive missile systems. One, which is being deployed only around Moscow, is clearly intended to defend against incoming ICBMs. The other, which is being deployed widely across the USSR, is *probably* designed for use against aircraft.

Blood has been shed on that "probably." That we still cannot be sure is, bluntly, an intelligence failure, and I don't want to gloss it over. We must find the evidence which will, one way or another, eliminate any uncertainty.

Beyond this there are other issues almost as important. How good is the Moscow system? If a chance remains that the wider system is designed or could be modified to defend against missiles, how good would it be? Are the Soviets investing in the massive civilian shelter program which should logically be part of an ABM system? What changes are they concurrently making in their ICBM force? Our answers to these questions, as best we can give them, have set the stage for this year's fight. If our findings are believed, we will at the least have narrowed down the range of budgetary choices. In so doing, we will have saved the taxpayer many times what was spent on the intelligence effort.

Thus our findings have great weight in shaping the national military budget. Tens of billions are spent or saved on our assurances, and the national economy in turn feels the impact of these decisions. Small wonder then that modern intelligence is very big business indeed. This nation, or any other, could not survive the weapons race without a powerful and sophisticated intelligence system.

Warning

There is another edge to the weaponry challenge. The ICBM and the thermonuclear warhead have made the early detection of an enemy threat overwhelmingly important. At the same time they have made it brutally difficult. So a sizable chunk of our budget goes to what we call the "warning" problem. We would hope the money is wasted, but October 1962 strengthened our conviction that it is not.

For the Cuban missile crisis was really an intelligence crisis. The threat appeared only through intelligence sources. Only those sources confirmed that the threat had gone away. I would like to go into this matter of how the threat was detected, principally to show you that intelligence work—like all serious inquiry—is a complex and arduous process.

Many thousands of Cubans fled their country in the early sixties. Many of them brought with them valuable information; others brought misinformation they thought was valuable; some knowingly brought misinformation in hopes of inducing the United States to strike down

Castro; a few were Castro's own agents planted to mislead us. The refugees would talk to anyone who would listen—intelligence officers, Congressmen, reporters.

To bring order into the flood of data, and to sort the good from the bad, the intelligence agencies set up in Florida a joint collection center, staffed with a hundred-odd trained linguists.. To help in the sorting, we ordered that every report of weapons in Cuba which was checkable against U-2 photography should be so checked. By the summer of 1962, the center was handling most of the refugees and passing to Washington thousands of reports.

To Washington also came thousands of other reports—from agents in Cuba, from friendly diplomatic services, from our naval attachés watching Soviet shipping outbound for Cuba through the Bosphorus and the Kattegat, from the U-2s over Cuba. By mid-August, we were sure that a massive increase in Soviet military assistance to Cuba was under way. By September we knew that this program included a surface-to-air missile defense system for the island.

In fact, by September we had hundreds of reports of missiles in Cuba—legitimate sightings of surface-to-air missile convoys on the roads, mistaken sightings of industrial pipe, fabricated scare stories of ICBMs. Against this background noise, the Soviet long-range surface-to-surface missile units began to arrive. And against this background their presence was exceedingly hard to detect. Our sources on the ground were not cool and highly trained observers, they were frightened men, mostly without military background. A Soviet surface-to-air defensive missile is 35 feet long; the 700-mile surface-to-surface ballistic missile which we nickname the SS-4 is about 60 feet long without its nose cone. To most of our sources the two were equally awesome and not to be distinguished from each other.

Nevertheless they reported what they saw, and their reports began before the end of September to reach Washington. This process took some days: the refugees had to get out of Cuba, and the agents usually had to report through the mails in secret writing.

Our analysts in Washington did their job too. After the crisis we went back to see in hindsight whether they had missed anything, and concluded that they could not have reacted more rapidly than they did. Out of the swirl of paper they had picked the crucial items as they came

in: a refugee from a port west of Havana claimed he had seen what from his description could have been an SS-4; a day or two later and many miles farther west another refugee had seen a convoy of round canvas-covered objects he thought were 60 or 70 feet long; an agent had earlier reported that an area farther west: yet on the same road had been closed to the public. These reports built up a pattern, but because of its importance and because of all the earlier false alarms it had to be checked against photography.. A "target card" was prepared for the U-2s, calling for a search of the closed area for evidence of the SS-4. When the weather opened up and we could fly again, that area was the first target. The rest of the story you know.

The crisis is long over, but the job goes on—interminably. Even today, every wild story that strategic missiles are still in Cuba is laboriously checked out and—so far—invariably disproved. The circumstances are tediously familiar: the sincere Cuban who cannot tell an air defense missile from a strategic one, or the liar with an axe to grind.

The point here is that we are doing our job, not by a flashy triumph of espionage, but by an enormous amount of painstaking work. All kinds of sources come into play, all kinds of people, good management, and a professional organization. This is the kind of work that we know pays off. The occasional Colonel Penkovsky is a windfall—a pure golden apple, but a windfall nonetheless.

Words

The second great challenge to intelligence in the postwar world is that of modern communications. Some call this the "information explosion." So it is, but it is also the all too human truth that people who have information feel compelled to share it with others. Modern communications provide them the means to do so, and make the conduct of foreign policy a nightmare.

A little over a century ago an ambassador in a foreign capital was very much on his own. His communications moved by sailing ship, and he could not seek new instructions when faced with the unexpected. If there was a rebellion he had to decide, for instance, whether to recognize the new government. Two weeks later, when the dust settled,

he could write a dispatch to his foreign office elegantly summarizing what had happened and what he had done about it. By the time his foreign minister could answer, another six weeks had gone by. The revolution was then history rather than foreign policy.

Today is another story. The ambassador can and does report each rifle shot as he hears it, and sends home almost verbatim accounts of every conversation. Each of his required decisions is debated in a dozen cable exchanges, and Washington groans under a surfeit of words.

Note, however, that the pressure for full and instantaneous reporting is not just a device to fuel the bureaucratic machine. In today's nuclear world it is often risky to leave what seems to be a local matter wholly in the hands of the man on the spot, however wise. In Berlin in the summer of 1961 Soviet and American tanks, muzzle to muzzle on opposite sides of the Wall, were controlled minute by minute from the White House, and apparently from the Kremlin, even down to the individual tank commander.

Nor is technology through with us yet. One shield against the paper hurricane has always been the need for trained personnel to turn words into electrical impulses—to punch a key or a keyboard. Even that shield has now been pierced. Xerox Corporation has built a highspeed facsimile transmitter and we have learned how to encipher its signal. Now an untrained operator can take a document and automatically encipher and transmit it—at 6-plus pages a minute. The entire Encyclopedia Britannica could be sent from our Headquarters to the State Department in a little over 60 hours.

No man can read a tenth of the high-priority paper that flows into Washington. Elaborate mechanisms must be built for screening and distilling. And here lies another role which the intelligence system has come to play in government. For lack of any other central mechanism, we have been charged with this vital filtering function.

The London Economist describes it thus:

Modern intelligence has to do with the painstaking collection and analysis of fact, the exercise of judgment, and clear and quick presentation. It is not simply what serious journalists would always produce if they had time: it is something more rigorous, continuous, and above all operational—that is to say, related to

something that somebody wants to do or may be forced to do.

We read everything that comes into Washington—State traffic, Defense traffic, our own traffic, the American and foreign press. From it we distill a brief, accurate account of events abroad, placed in context, related to one another, and presented in concise nonbureaucratic English. This we supply to the President, the Secretaries of State and Defense, and his other senior national security advisors.

Last fall, when the President was in Bangkok, the first word he received that Chancellor Erhard was in real political trouble was an intelligence cable. Last spring we filed in all about 5,000 words a day to the President in Punta del Este. He, his cabinet, and his staff have come to expect such service every day, around the clock, wherever they may be.

Note the problem: each of the top policy officers has a priority on our services. We cannot refuse a request from one because our resources are fully engaged in a task for another. What is more, each is entitled to have his particular interests satisfied, and satisfied in the form and at the time and place most convenient to him. In a sense we are the reverse of a newspaper. The paper uses a relatively few collectors to serve a mass audience; we use a mass of collectors to hand-craft for a very few.

The Subtle War

Now the third of our great challenges, that which I earlier called Soviet ideological imperialism. This is not a challenge CIA has sought. It has rather come to us as the sure consequence of U.S. national emergence as one of *the* two superpowers after 1945. With superpower came super-responsibility, and with both came that struggle with the Soviet Union which some call the Cold War.

"Cold War" has been the catch phrase for twenty years and, like all catch phrases, is going out of fashion. But to say, as many are now doing, that the Cold War is over is to confuse the words with the reality. Perhaps a new phrase should be coined. Why not call it the "Smiling

War"?

What has happened is that the nuclear stalemate has brought a difference in style to our struggle with the Soviet Union. The boorish application of shoe heels to desk tops is out; the patient application of national power is in. The Soviet diplomat no longer pretends proletarian brotherhood with the venal African tribal chief; but he still sees in Egypt a "progressive force," and his military and economic support to it is greater than ever. The Smiling War is less military, less shrill, more cautious, and more subtle. There are occasional issues in which Soviet interests and our interests coincide. The struggle has perhaps become less obvious as its main arena has shifted from Europe to the developing nations. But it is no less real and no less savage for all this. Much as I would like to, I cannot see it ending in our lifetime.

I say this bluntly because it needs to be said before the American people decide—as they did in the thirties and again in the war years and again in the late fifties—that the Russians have suddenly become good neighbors. They have not.

The hostility between the United States and the Soviets is based on what they would call "the objective situation." Essentially this means that we, as the other superpower, are the only real obstacle to their national imperatives, and vice versa. Furthermore, their national imperatives are formed by Marxism-Leninism. They are taught, and believe, that the world is engaged in a colossal and protracted struggle between what they call socialism and capitalism. They believe that in this struggle capitalist nations will gradually be weakened and, eventually and inevitably, destroyed from within by their own people. They believe that the United States, as the greatest capitalist power, is the main enemy. Finally, they believe that the proper strategy is to weaken the United States by destroying her influence in the world, to leave her alone in a sea of hostility. If you compare the world today with the world of fifteen years ago, you will see that they have not done too badly.

Those who say the Cold War is over usually point to Europe, where indeed Soviet diplomacy has become exceedingly polite, Soviet propaganda has been muted, and the local Communist parties have taken what the Chinese would call the bourgeois path. But I say to you: look at Europe from Moscow. Relaxation of the cruder pressures of Stalin and Khrushchev is encouraging petty national rivalries to re-

emerge. Lenin taught that these rivalries are characteristic of capitalist states and that they will lead to a series of wars, each more destructive than the last, until Communism alone remains undestroyed. Europe is today far from a third war, but economic problems are eroding British power, the French have taken an independent course, and Germany too is shaking off the psychological shackles of the postwar period.

There are also those who say that the dispute between Moscow and Peking has somehow ended the Cold War by reducing once monolithic Communism to a group of quarreling nation-states. The dispute is indeed real and bitter, but I say again: look at it from Moscow. China is still a socialist state, led astray momentarily by megalomaniac leaders, but socialist nonetheless. Mao is not immortal, and his passing should open the door to a return to the fold. But whether he lives or dies, it is not Chinese power that bars the Russian path, it is American power.

The View Ahead

To say that the Smiling War continues is not to say that it will never end. The Soviet leaders believe they can and must push it to victory. I believe they are wrong. They probably underestimate even now the basic unity and strength of Europe. They probably underestimate the extent to which Communist nations are subordinating their Communism to their nationhood. They probably underestimate the extent to which national prosperity will alter the goals of the Soviet state. They certainly underestimate the long-term incompatibility of Marxism-Leninism and the human soul.

We learned this yet again from Svetlana Stalin. When she passed through the embassy in Delhi she left behind a touching account of why she broke with her father's successors. Here are a few excerpts, written in her own English style.

"Since my childhood I have been taught Communism, and I did believe in it, as we all did, my generation. . . . I was brought up in the family where there was never any talk about God. But when I has become a grownup person I've found that it is impossible to exist without God in one's heart. I've come to that myself without anyone's help and preaching. But that was a great change to me, because since that moment the main

dogmas of Communism have lost their significance for me. . . . There are no capitalists and Communists for me—there are good people, or bad people, honest or dishonest, and in whatever country they live—people are the same everywhere, and their best expectations and moral ideals are the same. . . . My children are in Moscow and I do understand now that I might not see them for years. But I know, they will understand me. They also belong to the new generation in our country, which does not want to be fooled with old ideas. They also want to make their own conclusions about life. . . . Let the God help them."

This simple eloquence, and the ideas which underlie it, give good reason for hope that the leaders who will come from her "new generation" will indeed understand. But that time has not yet come. My point is simply this: no matter that we now see all these things adding up to an end to the Cold War, they still see the Cold War as a national imperative, and they are still waging it with every resource they can bring to bear.

They have come, at least, to realize that the struggle will be long, whereas two decades ago they thought it would be short. Containment has achieved that much; it has also unleashed the forces which we think will bring the Soviets to change their world outlook.

Taken all in all, we seem to be holding our own against the Soviets, but only because of our willingness to meet them head-on. In response to their challenge, we have fought with all our resources to "take the high ground." What do I mean by the high ground? The U.S. Government believes its national interest abroad is best served through orderly progress by stable governments. But stability is not enough for progress in most poor countries; their government must be reformist as well. Hence we see the world's best chance not in the rightist regime interested only in its own survival, but in governments toward the center or beyond the center which believe in changing things for the common good. We can work with King Feisal where we could not work with King Saud. We do not seek the blind old order but creative evolution away from it. This is the high ground.

The Communists, locked into a nineteenth-century ideology, see revolution as an end in itself. To them the greatest threat is precisely the reformist government which offers the poor and the fearful hope without chaos. Destroy this, and there is created the fateful polarization between embattled proletariat and repressive right which their ideology teaches them is the last stage before revolution. This is why in the

thirties the German party made common cause with Hitler to destroy the German Socialists. This is why Castro is trying to destroy the Venezuelan government today.

The unending struggle for the political high ground of course requires all the means available to a modern great power—diplomacy, propaganda, foreign aid, the threat of force, and clandestine action. I put clandestine action last, because for the United States it is not a standard political technique; it is the last resort.

A Case History

This is not true for the Soviet Union. Its leaders came to power through conspiracy. They think in terms of conspiracy. They believe clandestine action as important to the achievement of national goals as the diplomatic demarche or the ICBM. They devote a commensurate share of their resources to it, and they are good at it.

Ghana gained its independence under Kwame Nkrumah in 1957. The Soviet clandestine apparatus quickly recognized in Nkrumah's vanity and instability a vulnerable target. What happened in the next few years is a textbook example of how to build a wooden horse and capture a continent.

Using conventional diplomacy and propaganda, the Soviets inflated Nkrumah as a world figure, the great leader of Africa. Flattery coupled with lavish servings of cash and arms won his confidence. Playing on this confidence, the Soviets went straight for the keys of power.

They secured Nkrumah's invitation to come in and reorganize his intelligence and security services. In so doing they saw to it that there was a profusion of overlapping security organizations which opened the whole apparatus to Soviet manipulation. Twenty-two Russian intelligence officers turned up in key Ghanaian intelligence jobs. The Soviets also awarded Ghanaian intelligence officers "intelligence scholarships" in the USSR.

With this kind of leverage they were in a position to pursue their wider objective—one which went far beyond the borders of Ghana. What they

were really shooting for was the establishment of strong Soviet influence in a number of African states under the appealing cover of Ghana's radical African nationalism. All this and more we have learned from the regime which has run Ghana since Nkrumah's happy fall from office last February.

The Soviets were not the only Communists meddling in Ghana. The new government threw out three Chinese intelligence officers and 13 Chinese guerrilla warfare instructors. The latter were responsible for training Africans of various nationalities at secret camps, a program begun by the Russians. The Russians had not been a success, however; they drank too much and one of them got the camp cook plastered in order to seduce his wife. So the Chinese were called in.

The Chinese did much better. Quoting inexorably from Chairman Mao, they trained several hundred "freedom fighters" from such countries as Nigeria and the Ivory Coast. They taught them how to make crude explosives and fuses under field conditions, how to set an ambush, how to handle small arms, communications, and—invariably how to "raise the ideological level," Chinese for political indoctrination.

Then there were the East Germans; they apparently concentrated on espionage training. Two skilled intelligence officers were sent to Ghana to train Ghanaian agents targeted against neighboring African states. Their students became very proficient, but somehow they seemed to be doing more work against the West German embassy than' against the African ones.

All in all, the new government expelled 1,100 Russians, 430 Chinese, and smaller numbers from the East European countries. Had their activities been permitted to go on much longer, Nkrumah's position would have been impregnable. He would not, however, have been the man in charge, no matter what he himself believed. And Ghanaian diplomacy, propaganda, and subversion would have carried the Soviet and Chinese intelligence services piggy-back across Africa.

The Defense

This is why there exists in the Central Intelligence Agency something

called the Clandestine Services. The United States is a major power. We cannot abdicate this role, but we cannot play it successfully if our rival recruits a clique and we do not. Faced with a powerful and ruthless enemy, the United States has no choice but to defend itself in kind. As a deliberate act of national policy, it decided to create a clandestine intelligence service which could meet the Soviet service, or any other, on even terms.

To do this Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947, which established CIA. The act specified that CIA, in addition to producing intelligence, would perform "other functions and duties" directed by the National Security Council. Congress deliberately left this wording vague, for it was intended to authorize the conduct of clandestine operations abroad, including espionage and political and paramilitary action. The *primary* function was and remains the collection of foreign intelligence; the action functions were and remain secondary. The tail does not wag the dog. This national decision created something new in American political life, an action arm of government operating in secrecy. The appropriation for a new weapons system is fully debated in the Congress and the press; the appropriation for the National Students Association was not. Our critics have argued that the Association should have been publicly funded; our defenders have replied that it could not have been. Both are probably right. Certainly today such activities both should and could be openly supported by government and quasigovernment funds. We, and the government as a whole, and the Congress, and the nation itself, can be faulted for not recognizing the need for open support and doing something about it sooner.

Nonetheless there remain many situations in which open American aid would defeat its own purposes. Political activity in many nations outside Europe and North America is cynically manipulated by domestic or foreign interests. Yet the accusation of foreign interference is a potent political weapon. It is ironic that many of the most admirable reformist politicians who, by holding the high ground, are working in the United States' interest could not survive the taint of accepting U.S. support. It is hardly astonishing that their opponents are heavily financed and supported by the Soviet intelligence services. It is a taste of bitter medicine that some of these men will go down unless they are sustained from outside. Faced with these dismal facts of life, our national authorities have decided that naive lip service to a spurious democracy is not enough; they have decided that the genuine democratic process must be given a fighting chance by evening up the

odds.

Under the circumstances it is perhaps inevitable that CIA should become world-wide the symbol of evil machination and power exerted behind the scenes; certainly our Soviet opposite numbers do everything they can to assist this inevitability. At home we are portrayed as chilly-minded zealots pursuing a sterile anti-Communism. We *are* powerful and we do work behind the scenes. But I know we are not evil and we are not zealots, and I hope that the students' affair will demonstrate that our cast of mind is far from sterile. Nor are we anti anything; we are *for* something. We are a supple instrument of the American people. We are for them and for their national interests.

Secrecy and Freedom

Indeed, we are sober holders of the public trust. Heavy responsibilities have been placed on the American intelligence officer. And these responsibilities have forced upon him an importance in government which no intelligence officer ever had. Never has he been so influential—or so conspicuous. Never has he had to conduct clandestine operations or figure the esoteric equations of national strength with the press and the public thus peeping over his shoulder—irritated that they are unwelcome. For, despite our image as a set of coldly efficient plotters—and I rather prefer that image to the one that has us a set of bumbling incompetents—the area of intelligence over which we can maintain the traditional secrecy has been steadily reduced.

An important reason for this breakdown is the conflict built into the conduct of secret operations in a free society. We recognize that the word intelligence brings up a number of images abhorrent to the Western mind: government conducted in secrecy; torture and blackmail; the exploitation of human frailty. Only 38 years ago Henry Stimson demolished the nation's code-breaking organization because "Gentlemen do not read each other's mail." A gentleman in that tradition is indeed scarce in the savage international politics of the sixties.

I do not propose to give you an easy answer to the objections raised by those today who, like Mr. Stimson, consider intelligence work incompatible with principle. I cannot, because I do not have one. The

nation must to a degree take it on faith that we too are honorable men devoted to her service. I can assure you that we are, but I cannot prove it. The nation must in fact compromise, as we must, between the needs of a democratic society and the needs of the inhospitable world in which it must survive. We do compromise, as evidenced by my speaking to you here this way.

In a broader sense our dilemma is also yours, and the nation's. In a column some time ago Walter Lippman said:

The challenge to democratic government arises from the fact that it comes down to us from the 18th and 19th centuries, from the age before the great technological revolution of this century. . . . To preserve the moral and spiritual values of democratic institutions and at the same time to be able to govern this new technological society effectively is a problem which will haunt us for a long time to come. Nobody has as yet found a solution to it.

I have described to you some of the ways in which 20th-century technology—and ideology too—have forced our intelligence system to grow in size and importance. The problems this growth creates for our society are just one symptom of the larger problem Mr. Lippman identifies. When that is solved, perhaps ours will be too. Failing that, I do not believe American intelligence can become much less controversial and conspicuous than it is today.

Policy Decisions

There is another problem which troubles many thoughtful people—the relationship of intelligence to policy. American intelligence does not make policy, but its studies and reports surely influence the policy maker. This is only right. As the government's senior intelligence officer, I am responsible for advising the President not just on intelligence but on the policy inferences to be drawn from it. The United States Intelligence Board is often asked to prepare what we call "contingency estimates"—what would the Soviets, the Chinese, the North Vietnamese, the rest of

the world, do if the United States did "X"? If the answers to such a question did not influence policy, the country would be in a sorry state indeed.

Another example. Should we decide the bloody and primeval dictatorship in Haiti is fraying at the edges, it would be our duty to issue a warning. How we chose to word that warning could be ticklish indeed. The Dominican Republic is right next door, and its travail is fresh in the minds of our readers. If we were to talk gently in such terms as "erosion of Duvalier's authority" we might not stir a preoccupied Washington. On the other hand, if we used scare words—"imminent collapse"—official Washington would be set to shuddering. However dicey these activities are in practice, they are legitimate functions of an intelligence system. They are what you, the taxpayer, are buying. The rub comes when the intelligence apparatus is chosen by national authority to be the instrument for carrying out a national policy and the apparatus has itself produced the intelligence on which that policy is based.

There is unquestionably a possibility that we might shape the intelligence to justify what we already wanted to do. Mistakes will be made so long as intelligence is run by human beings. Nevertheless, there are three reasons why I believe we can limit our errors.

The first is simply that we grow older and wiser.

The second is that there are safeguards in the system; the operators who are to carry out a policy are organizationally isolated from the analysts who make the intelligence judgments. The analysts use some information furnished by the operators, but they do not rely on this information alone. There are many sources of information besides our own Clandestine Services, and all of these are brought to bear. Our substantive experts in Washington are fiercely objective and proud of it. If anything, since organizational rivalries are not unknown in the bureaucracy, they tend to be a little hostile to any proposal for clandestine action.

One of my functions is to see that the two chains, operative and analytic, stay independent of one another, that out of this rivalry grows a healthy dialogue. I need to be confident that proposals for action are sound. The requirement to commit the Clandestine Services may originate in the White House, the Department of State or of Defense, or with an ambassador or commander in the field, but the Director of

Central Intelligence must defend the project and—as you may have noticed—absorb the "fall-out" when something goes wrong.

This is the third reason for my confidence. The President's committee which approves these operations consists of some of the toughest minded men in government; they have the power to make a "no" stick, and they say "no" often. We are alleged to be out of control and irresponsible in action. We are neither. For intelligence is the servant of the U.S. Government, not its master. We will undertake to do what the authorities ask us to do, no more and we hope no less.

Official Integrity

Given this, it is sometimes difficult for us to understand the intensity of our public critics. Criticism of our efficiency is one thing, criticism of our responsibility quite another. I believe that we are, as an important arm of government, a legitimate object of public concern. I believe we should be supervised by Congress, and I believe it is the right of Congress to decide how that supervision shall be exercised. I find it most painful, however, when public debate lessens our usefulness to the nation by casting doubt on our integrity and objectivity. If we are not believed, we have no purpose.

Responsibility, objectivity, independence: these are the legs of our stool. I have said a good deal about responsibility and objectivity; I should not overlook independence. For the Central Intelligence Agency, despite its role in clandestine operations, is the only national security agency not primarily devoted to policy and action. Our primary end products are sure information and judgment. We can be independent of the general who wants to justify a billion for a new weapons system, or of the ambassador who has been beguiled by a head of state. Secretary McNamara knows this, and he knows that any government department committed to conducting a war cannot be totally objective about it. So he turns to us for an independent measure of events in Vietnam. We try to give him the unvarnished truth, good or bad.

Responsibility, objectivity, independence. For twenty years we have been trying to burn these ideas into our people. And I think we have succeeded in creating a deep-seated professional integrity, unshaken by

inward emotion or outward pressure.

One final point. The same objectivity which makes our people so valuable to their country makes them uncomfortably aware of their ambiguous place in it. They understand as well as anyone the difficulties and contradictions of conducting intelligence operations in a free society. They are prepared to overcome the difficulties and live with the contradictions because they believe in a free society.. Because they believe in their country, they do not want to see their work distort its values. They want to adapt intelligence to American society, not vice versa. And because we all want to see that society grow on in a fearsome world, we must all work to that end.

Bibliography

1 Adapted from a talk given before the Council on Foreign Relations on 17 April 1987.

~~OFFICIAL USE ONLY~~

Posted: May 08, 2007 08:11 AM