

THE C.I.A. AND N.G.O.'S

For the moment, at least, the Central Intelligence Agency must be the most discussed and exposed covert operation in existence. As *worldview* noted editorially in its issue of September 1965, "in spite of the public attention the C.I.A. has received we can assume that, like the iceberg, the greater portion lies well below eye level." This is undoubtedly still true—and as it should be. The disclosures do, however, raise questions which will always trouble an open society: How extensive and powerful should covert operations be, and how can proper limitations be set? How can one assess the value of C.I.A. influence in, e.g., student organizations, and how can one assess the harm done when that influence is revealed?

These are central questions and deserve continuing thought and discussion. But the recent disclosures about the C.I.A. also point up serious problems that exist quite apart from the C.I.A. For example, many of the groups that are presently said to have received money from the C.I.A. actually accepted it from non-governmental organizations (N.G.O.'s) which acted as conduits. And this use of N.G.O.'s by the C.I.A. complicates a problem that was already growing more complex than any set of available responses: What is the proper role of non-governmental organizations in our society? And, if they are increasingly important—as they seem to be—how and by whom are they to be financed?

•

Since the term "non-governmental organization" is used in differing contexts, any initial definition will be, to some degree, arbitrary. A good working definition was offered by the Carnegie Corporation: the term "is arbitrarily limited to those organizations that have a private and nonprofit status but are *not* universities, colleges or schools, hospitals, fully endowed foundations, or religious missions. It includes scholarly, professional, educational, scientific, literary, and cultural associations; health, welfare, and community action agencies; non-university research institutes; agencies providing overseas technical assistance; defense advisory organizations; and agencies that have educational purposes but are not part of the formal educational system."

These private non-governmental organizations perform many services in the public interest and, given the complexity of our society, both the range of their activities and the extent of their responsibilities seem destined to grow. The best of these agencies perform services that the society needs and the government cannot perform, nor will any profit-making agency. They can, for example, move readily into areas that need open intellectual examination and arrive at relatively objective appraisal; they are free to examine and explore tender, touchy problems and to raise the hard and unpleasant questions; they can be committed to principles without being partisan to parties.

The Council on Religion and International Affairs, for example, examines foreign policy within the moral context in which it is shaped and relates that foreign policy to the democratic processes of our country. It brings into a common forum of discussion highly competent people in and out of government, people with widely divergent views, allegiances and backgrounds. These people are united in their belief that sustained political discussion is valuable and they are able to develop

and refine that intellectual exchange, that civilized and informed dialogue which is necessary to the health of a democratic society.

When visitors from other countries—students, businessmen and political leaders—have attended these forums they have almost unfailingly been impressed with the ability of such groups to carry on open, informed, intense debate on issues of national importance. They learn something that is very special about our society, something that is fostered by a host of non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, many of the private organizations that perform this public service lack sufficient funds to extend or even maintain that service. If they had sufficient funds fewer of them would have become dependent on the C.I.A., and those services which they rendered that were valuable could well have been carried on openly. That the C.I.A. became involved in the way it did exposes it to criticism, but that it became involved is a judgment on a society which has not yet found a way properly to evaluate and support those non-partisan, nonprofit, non-governmental organizations that are vital to its welfare.

J.F.

in the magazines

Reprinted below is the major portion of an editorial on "Bombs and Balms" which appeared in the February 1 issue of *The Christian Century*:

"If reports we have read in the *Los Angeles Times* and the *Toronto Daily Star* are correct, the United States government repudiates scriptural injunctions about feeding the hungry enemy or in other ways ministering to him in his misery. In fact the Johnson Administration not only refuses to involve itself in that kind of charity but also tries to hamper individual Christians and Christian institutions that try to obey the injunctions. The *Times* states that 'the Johnson Administration is quietly attempting to block donations by American Quakers to a Canadian Quaker group sending medical supplies to North Vietnam and the Viet Cong.'

"In October the U.S. Treasury instructed 14,000 U.S. banks not to honor checks payable to the Canadian Friends Service Committee or its officers for medical goods. The *Star* stated: 'The U.S. government has forbidden Canadian subsidiaries of American drug

companies to sell medical supplies to Canadian Quakers for shipment to North Vietnam. The regulation was quoted yesterday by Stanley Sommerfield, chief counsel for the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control. Sommerfield also hinted at possible severe retaliation against the Royal Bank of Canada for its refusal to cooperate in choking off funds to the Canadian Friends Service Committee of Toronto.' ...

"By the time this is read a shipment of 640,000 anti-malarial and antibiotic tablets will be on its way to Vietnam despite U.S. government harassment—probably on a Soviet-bloc ship out of a Canadian harbor. This shipment will be divided three ways among the South Vietnam Red Cross and the Red Cross organizations of North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front. The United States attempt to stop such shipments in a reprehensible intrusion into the internal affairs of Canada and an intolerable repression of the Christian's right to obey the elementary commandments of his faith. The United States spends