SPOOKING THE CLERGY. "The President does not feel it would be wise at present to prohibit the CIA from having any connection with the clergy."

Thus, White House Counsel Philip Buchen. Not, as the naive or unway might think, because President Ford believes that agents of the CIA need additional religious ministrations. Besides, a directive with such intent might be thought to breach that mythical wall of separation between Church and State. The relation the President has in mind is apparently above such suspicion, for Mr. Buchen’s letter continues: “Clergymen throughout the world are often valuable sources of intelligence and many clergymen, motivated solely by patriotism, voluntarily and willingly aid the government by providing information of intelligence value.”

That’s only one of the pieces of business to hit the CIA fan recently, but it has made a lot of people distinctly unhappy, including government officials, church leaders, and interested laity. Mr. Buchen’s letter was, in fact, a reply to Senator Mark Hatfield, who wrote to President Ford and William Colby, Director of CIA, expressing both concern and dismay over recent press reports linking missionaries and CIA agents. But the Senator did not rest with these letters—or the replies, which must have seemed doefully inadequate to him. (In his reply to the Senator, Mr. Colby wrote: “In many countries of the world representatives of the clergy, foreign and local, play a significant role and can be of assistance to the United States through CIA with no reflection upon their integrity nor their mission.”) After receiving these replies Senator Hatfield introduced legislation (S.2784) to prohibit the involvement of the CIA and other intelligence operations with missionaries.

Church leaders have also criticized CIA’s policy and have disputed Colby’s contention that mission work is not tainted by the parochial interests of CIA. The Reverend William Wipfler of the National Council of Churches said, for example, that “Every United States missionary is now suspect,” and many would support his statement.

Perhaps not surprisingly, most of the information available about links between CIA and missionaries is anecdotal, not quantitative or statistical. And there are anecdotes that show CIA and missionaries were sometimes pulling in opposite directions. The assumed convergence of interests that existed in days of heated American anticomununism is less evident today.

It seems doubtful that Senator Hatfield’s bill will muster enough support to pass, essential that church and missionary leaders set their own guidelines, and certain that the issue is not yet laid to rest. For apart from the issues directly addressed in the present debate, a whole unmentioned set of problems should be included in the guidelines. For example, if missionaries should not cooperate with CIA, should they sever or refrain from establishing ties with the intelligence agencies of, say, guerrilla groups or with liberation groups opposed to U.S. policies? And if distinctions are to be made—if missionaries should aid some groups and not others—from what sources will the religious, moral, and political discriminations be drawn?

TORTURE IN CHILE. Late last year His Excellency Miguel Schweitzer, Minister of Justice in Chile, spoke to a number of distinguished groups and prominent people about the state of human rights in Chile. He acknowledged that some abuses had taken place for a period after the overthrow of Allende, but asserted that matters had now been righted. Those cases to which the liberal Western press referred were either unsubstantiated or misunderstood and misrepresented. Senator Schweitzer was an urbane, informed, articulate, and persuasive spokesman for his country and the present regime.

Less urbane and with less theoretical acquaintance with the subject of violated human rights, Dr. Sheila Cassidy has become a more persuasive spokesperson. On the basis of personal experience, Dr. Cassidy presents a case in direct contradiction to that of Chile’s Minister of Justice. For Dr. Cassidy is the Englishwoman whose account of hours of electric torture inflicted on her during months of imprisonment in Chilean prisons has caused an international flare-up.

Stressing that her work was strictly medical, she told of helping Nelson Gutierrez, a wounded member of MIR (Movement of the Revolutionary Left), an act for which she was imprisoned. Accounting for why she did not turn him in to the Chilean authorities, she said: “You can’t make a parallel between helping a criminal or political terrorist in Britain and helping someone in Chile. At this moment in Chile there is widespread and systematic torture and detention. Handing over Gutierrez to the secret police would have sent him to certain torture and probable death.”

The Western liberal press and its readers may misunderstand some aspects of Chile today, but the existence of governmental torture in Chile is not open to such misinterpretation. There, as elsewhere, it remains an abomination.

VIETNAM—“POST-VIETNAM.” Many of the wounds inflicted by the Vietnam war remain untreated. In this country we have done little to help
the Vietnam veteran. In fact, his presence is scarcely noticed. And most of those whose acts led them to resist that war have yet to be granted amnesty. Furthermore, few Americans show serious interest in present Vietnam—including those who supported the war as well as those in the peace movement who vehemently opposed the war.

All the more welcome, therefore, is the strong statement issued by the Interreligious Committee of General Secretaries urging reconciliation between the United States and the nations of Indochina. (The Committee is made up of the chief executive officers of the U.S. Catholic Conference, National Council of Churches, and the Synagogue Council of America.)

The Committee recalls that "the Judeo-Christian tradition places strong emphasis upon reconciliation and healing after periods of corporate conflict," and then zeros in on particular acts, governmental and private, that should be accomplished. Presently, humanitarian aid and the shipment of tools and small machinery to Indochina are limited by an embargo stemming from the Trading With the Enemy Act. This act was created in 1917 to stem support for the Germans during World War I. It has since been used for a variety of purposes, and now inhibits the economic construction of Vietnam, North and South, and of Cambodia. Reconstruction efforts by, for example, the American Friends Service Committee and the Mennonite Central Committee have been blocked by the present embargo.

The Interreligious Committee summarizes its good statement in these terms: "We seek the normalization of relations between our nations as soon as possible. To this end we urge that the trade embargo be lifted, that negotiations for appropriate massive government reconstructive relief begin, and until such aid is forthcoming, that the citizenry support private efforts for a people-to-people aid program for the victims of the war. This voluntary effort would contribute significantly to healing the wounds of war."

THE ARMORY OF FOOD. Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz once described the capacity of the U.S. to produce food as a quiver in our diplomatic arsenal. Other Americans have adopted the concept if not the metaphor. And the possibilities of using food as a weapon are, if not endless, at least varied. For example:

India seems to be having severe internal disturbances at the moment, but the amendment that Senator Jesse Helms wished to attach to a foreign aid bill would have intensified them. The Senator wished to deny economic help to any country that set off a nuclear device in any five-year period prior to the allocation of such aid. But he acknowledged that presently the amendment would, in fact, apply only to India. His motion was vigorously attacked by Senator Hubert Humphrey, who pointed out that India was a large cash customer for American wheat, that it had doubled its own grain production in the last fifteen years, that it had nuclear neighbors, that foreign assistance was regarded as sound national policy, that the American people had indicated they were willing to share their abundance—and that it was bad policy to promote starvation even to prevent nuclear proliferation. Senator Helms's amendment was tabled, but it seems almost certain that its ghost will rise again.

—AND RUSSIA. The Soviet Union, no secret, has had a particularly bad harvest. And it still devotes a considerable portion of its budget to armaments. Query: Should the U.S. use its sale of food grains to the USSR as a lever in armament negotiations? In the tense debate over Angola? In enforcing those portions of the Helsinki agreements related to human rights? In any policy issue? The national answer seems to be No. From President Ford to the Midwest farmers whom he addressed on the subject (admittedly not the widest spectrum), regional sales and national balance of payments outweighed other considerations.

ANGOLA. The Organization of African Unity has failed to agree on Angola, and Kenneth Kaunda, President of Zambia, has said that the failure has handed Africa to the Superpowers. This would seem to support those who see in Angola a Test of Wills between the U.S. and the USSR. But President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania has said that Russian support of African groups does not mean African support of communism, as is frequently asserted. The contrast in possible views of the same evidence was made starkly explicit in the New York Times of January 18. Calling Moscow's intervention in Angola more brazen than anything previously attempted, Ernest Lefever, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, sees Angola as one more test ground between the U.S. and USSR. (And, not incidentally, suggests cutting off grain shipments to the Soviet Union if the USSR doesn't shape up.) And he sees the U.S. as the victim of a creeping paralysis of power.

In a letter to the editor in the same issue of the Times, Elliott P. Skinner, former U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Upper Volta, assesses some of the same evidence as Mr. Lefever, but comes to notably different conclusions. In Africa, he argues, we should be concerned first with Africans, not with tensions between the two Superpowers. On the basis of Mr. Skinner's argument, the situation looks less like a Test of Wills than a test of information, intelligence, and judgment.

Abraham Martin Murray is the collective name of those who contribute to "A View of the World." The opinions expressed sometimes coincide with those of the editors.