

# Why the CIA has not made a comeback

by Paul Goldstein

At the outset of the Reagan administration, the U.S. intelligence community believed that support would be forthcoming to rebuild the Central Intelligence Agency following its near destruction during the Carter years under the direction of Adm. Stansfield Turner. Now, after the first seven months of the new administration, the CIA faces essentially the same problems that have persisted since Watergate.

The politics of rebuilding a nation's intelligence establishment after years of neglect, abuse, and sabotage are much like those of rebuilding a nation. If the game-masters in charge of reconstruction do not understand the fundamentals of statecraft, the same dirty political operations can be carried out against intelligence agencies again and again. The cry of "KGB moles" will arise from the British-accented voices of the Heritage Foundation; but the most effective enemies of a powerful CIA can be found elsewhere, not least at Foggy Bottom.

With the advent of the Reagan administration, despite its weaknesses and handicaps, a new possibility existed for the CIA to preempt the Socialist International and its allies from seizing the political initiative in Central America, the Mideast, and Southern Africa. The case of Mexico is the clearest example: the general belief within the intelligence community was that "stabilization operations," including counterterror measures to aid allies like Mexican President López Portillo, rather than "destabilizations," could become the focus of U.S. foreign policy. However, the spokesmen for a certain commitment to strategic sanity were silenced after the Casey/Hugel and Wilson/Terpil scandals (to be discussed in future articles) and related press maneuvers, giving Secretary of State Alexander Haig et al. the opportunity they needed to consolidate their positions.

## The axe falls

What happened can best be summarized on the following level. Once the Reagan administration was installed, each time the CIA attempted to swing congressional and executive support behind upgraded intelligence capabilities, the *New York Times*, Department of Justice, and most importantly the State Depart-

ment, sought to undercut the agency. The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, the mouthpieces for the Eastern Establishmentarians within the administration, led a campaign to quash the emergence of a political faction that could guide the White House in foreign policy, independently of Haig. The media, State Department, and Justice Department sought not simply to curtail CIA covert activity, but to ensure that the basis for any policy alternative concerning the Soviet Union and the Third World would never emerge.

The power struggle which occurred in the aftermath of the attempted assassination of President Reagan left Haig in a strengthened position. Before the Hinckley attack, sources in the intelligence community reported that Haig's ties to the Trilateral Commission had been severed, and that Henry Kissinger's access to Haig was "totally cut off."

Then disaster struck the expectant "old-boys" network, and a whole new configuration emerged within the administration. Kissinger, Rockefeller, Fritz Kraemer became dominant in policy-making. A "gag order" was put out by the President stating that anyone who criticized Haig would be fired. The U.S. ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Robert Neumann, was the first to get the axe.

What this situation entails is that the CIA no longer has the ability to run independent covert operations on behalf of the United States without constantly facing exposés on the front pages of the *New York Times*. And, according to military intelligence sources, the State Department and the FBI have been engaged in an all-out war to prevent the CIA from gaining control over counterterror operations.

The CIA's weakness is most acute on the intelligence-gathering side. Over the years, dependence has increased on foreign intelligence services, especially the British and Israelis. According to well-placed U.S. intelligence specialists, the United States now lacks any significant independent intelligence-gathering capability concerning internal political developments within the Soviet Union.

The CIA has a longstanding reliance upon Israel's Mossad for crucial leaks and key intelligence about Soviet nonmilitary developments. Now, more than ever, the agency relies to a shocking extent on the Mossad. Additionally, the Socialist government of François Mitterrand has opened new French channels for the CIA on Soviet activity in the Third World and Europe. Meanwhile British intelligence, through both its MI-6 official relationship with the CIA and through its covert institutions, has been directing U.S. intelligence activity for years, especially in regard to Asia.

It should be obvious that the self-interests of these foreign agencies are not identical with those of the United States.