

Restore Trust

CIA Still Needs an Outsider to

By David Wise

Theodore Sorensen, the spy left out in the cold of President Carter's inaugural week, said he felt as though he had been "blinded by a truck." The questions being asked now are:

- Who was the driver?
- What kind of a person should Carter appoint to CIA now? Some prefer that he turn to an intelligence insider. But, paradoxically and despite Sorensen's withdrawal, only an outsider — not a professional spy — has any chance of restoring CIA's shattered image.

Forty-eight hours after Sorensen had dramatically withdrawn his name, from Senate consideration as nominee for director of central intelligence, former CIA chief William E. Colby said that he had turned down an approach by "a political figure," whom he did not identify, to join in a campaign to torpedo Sorensen. Colby also said he found Sorensen's qualifications for the CIA job "quite impressive."

Other former and present CIA officials managed to suppress their enthusiasm for the late President Kennedy's chief adviser and speech writer. In the CIA and the Pentagon, intelligence professionals had been talking against the nomination for several weeks.

It is clear that Sorensen himself believed that he had, in part, been the victim of a covert operation in which some CIA officials had participated. "Some members of the intelligence community" had spread falsehoods about him, Sorensen claimed.

Sorensen is a high-powered New York attorney with the firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison, and a craftsman with words, so his use of the broad phrase "intelligence community" to describe his opponents was not accidental. Sorensen did not wish to single out CIA, since the agency's senior officials had been courteous and helpful in briefing him on what he thought would be his new responsibilities. For several days, Sorensen had actually been working at CIA, using the office of E. Henry Knoche, the agency's deputy director.

The opposition to Sorensen, however, was not confined to the CIA or "the intelligence community," Sorensen also blamed right wing groups, including the American Conservative Union — which happily took credit for helping to block his nomination. But the forces arrayed against Carter's nominee were far broader than that. The CIA, other military and intelligence officials, right wing organizations, Republican and Democratic conservatives on the Senate Intelligence Committee, some Democratic liberals on the committee, Senate Democratic leader Robert C. Byrd and Republican leader Howard H. Baker Jr., and elements in the press all joined hands in an unlikely alliance to stage a faintly bizarre sort of counter-inaugural.

So, to our first question we surely must answer that the intelligence community and its friends had an

important role in upsetting the Sorensen nomination. But the bus that rolled over Sorensen had, many drivers.

Washington is a very cruel city. It enjoys nothing better than seeing a public figure brought down, and there was something of the Roman Colosseum in the atmosphere as Sorensen faced the committee in the Kleig-Hit Senate Caucus Room. Sorensen has an icy personal style that makes him appear cold to many people even when he is trying to be nice. "In the White House," one veteran Washington official said, "Sorensen had a reputation for being cold, even ruthless, and too loyal. There was lots of scar tissue from the Kennedy years. Then there was Chappaquiddick" (in which Sorensen helped to draft Senator Edward M. Kennedy's explanatory statement).

Some opponents charged Sorensen lacked experience to run CIA (although several previous directors, including the most recent, George Bush, had no intelligence experience). Opponents also charged that Sorensen's status as a conscientious objector — he had registered as a noncombatant — disqualified him for CIA.

Then, on the weekend before the hearing, the press disclosed that Sorensen had taken seven cartons of classified documents from the White House, used them to write his book, Kennedy, then donated the papers to the government and claimed a tax deduction of \$231,900, which the IRS later reduced to \$89,000. Although the practice was legal at the time, this disclosure was the straw that broke the camel's back. The documents furor was really a false issue, however, masking the political and ideological struggle being waged over the nomination. Presidents and lesser officials have made off with classified documents for years; used them in their memoirs and sold to the public in book form the very secrets that they had previously claimed needed protection. These same officials have denounced the press for printing "national security" information. What Sorensen had done was a matter of public record, contained in two affidavits he had filed in the Pentagon Papers case and the trial of Daniel Ellsberg. The truth is that Sorensen was too liberal for the hawks and hardliners, the intelligence and military establishments in Washington and their allies on Capitol Hill who distrust gente and SALTY, and who have been warning that the Soviet Union seeks military superiority over the United States. Carter, who had no taste for a nasty fight in his triumphal inaugural week, withdrew his support for Sorensen once it was clear that his nominee for CIA did not have the votes in the committee. The irony of all this — Sorensen's particular problems aside — is that Carter had chosen the kind of person who should head CIA and the intelligence community. For three years,

David Wise is author of The American Police State, a new book on American intelligence agencies.

official investigations have revealed a horror chamber of CIA abuses, ranging from domestic spying and opening of first-class mail to hiring gangsters to assassinate Fidel Castro.

As a result of these disclosures, public confidence in CIA is understandably low. Thus if President Carter has any hope at all of rehabilitating CIA and restoring trust in the agency, he must logically turn once again to an outsider rather than a career spy. Covert operators like Richard Helms and William Colby, who have served as CIA directors in the past, will not do now. Carter should also be looking for someone who has at least been moderately critical of CIA abuses. Both the Rockefeller Commission and the Church committee officially concluded that the CIA had broken the law. A staunch defender of the agency, someone who sees no wrong in that fact, would hardly be likely to inspire public confidence.

Carter himself emphasized CIA abuses during the campaign — all the more reason for him to seek someone, like Sorensen, who does not see CIA in indelible colors of red, white and blue.

Carter's first choice for the CIA job apparently was not Sorensen, but Thomas L. Hughes, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Hughes, former director of State Department intelligence, has long felt that the agency's covert operations should be put somewhere else in the government and CIA confined to intelligence collection and estimating. In November, Vice President-elect Mondale approached Hughes, who also had the backing of

such foreign policy pillars as Dean Rusk and Averell Harriman. But Hughes, preferring Carnegie to an "eels' nest," said no to the CIA job.

Inside the intelligence agencies, there appears to be little perception that what CIA needs most is a director in whom the public can have confidence. The intelligence operators would much rather have someone whom they themselves trust. The logic of a critic to head CIA does not appeal to most present or former intelligence officials. For example, Ray S. Cline, former head of CIA's analytical side, and author of *Spycrafts, Spies and Scholars*, believes the "prime requirement" for a CIA director now is someone "whose attitude is generally supportive of CIA." Cline favors a skillful bureaucrat who can "represent the interests of the intelligence community in dealing with the President and Congress."

The Sorensen debacle has not helped the new Senate Intelligence Committee get off to a smooth start. Chairman Daniel K. Inouye and other members of the panel are extremely sensitive to any implication that the committee might have been the source of leaks against Sorensen, or that its members were swayed by CIA pressures. Around the committee, it is claimed that the damaging Sorensen affidavits were discovered by the committee itself, through a routine staff check of the New York Times files.

Perhaps. But there were a lot of other forces at work. Sorensen himself may have offered the best explanation of what happened when he said that "many little dirty streams flowed together to make one large one."