

WEDNESDAY, MAY 24, 1978

Cooling Off With William Colby

Ex-CIA Chief—at Least the Posters Are Gone

By Paul Hendrickson

Impulsively: "The latest story about me is that I'm the 'mole.' You know, on the side of the Russians. It's not really said to my face, just insinuated. Have you heard?" He shrugs. "I've had lots of bum raps. I shake them off."

William Colby, 58, looks stern and priestly, like a Jesuit prefect of discipline. Thin, streaked hair combs straight back. The mouth presses firm and flat. His glasses are a transparent pink — you keep forgetting they're there. Only his eyes seem to give something away. They look close and tight, ready to squint, as if small invisible hands were pushing at them.

"The perfect operator in such situations," Colby writes in "Honorable Men," an account of his life in the CIA "is the traditional gray man, so inconspicuous that he can never catch the waiter's eye in a restaurant."

He is sitting in his law office nine floors above I Street NW, around the corner from the Federal City Club, where he often lunches and will today. He is in a crisp blue suit, blue oxford shirt, blue tie with tiny para-

chutes on it. No wingtips, though: black loafers.

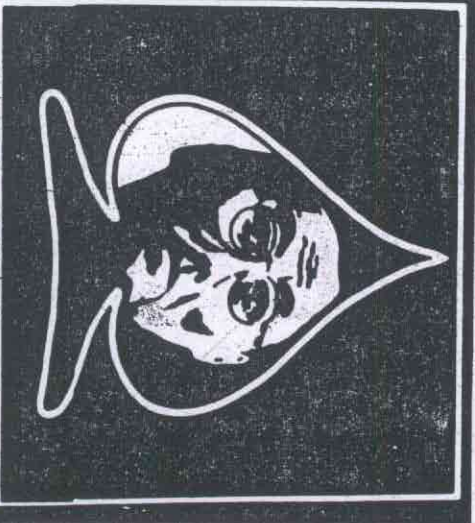
The office is airy and white (creamy sofas and glass table-tops) and has the still-tentative look of a new business. Colby, Miller & Hanes has been in practice since last September. The firm is interested, says the founding partner, in legal problems connected with the flow of information in a credit-card society.

"It's a new area of the law. I figured there was no merit in trying to steal Covington & Burling's business." (In addition to getting the practice going, Colby has been negotiating with a Tokyo public relations firm to represent them stateside. He will have to register with the Justice Department under the Foreign Agents Registration Act.)

Law was a natural course for him. After all, he started out as a lawyer. That was 30 years ago, in New York, after he had come home from OSS service in the war and earned a law degree at Columbia. But it wasn't in the cards then for William Egan Colby, Princeton '40, to rise through the ranks at Donovan, Leisure, New-

See COLBY, C4, Col. 1

The lecture circuit has turned out better than William Colby expected considering hate posters like the one at left once decorated college campuses and subway walls.



WANTED:

COLBY, W.E.

FOR:

FOR:



/ The Arts / Classified

C1



By Harry Nalchayan—The Washington Post

For William

COLBY, From C1

ton, Lombard and Irvine. He had too much itch to scratch. There were too many heady memories of parachuting out of the Slick Chick behind enemy lines, blowing up railroads in Norway, joining resistance networks, for him to go to work at a desk on Wall Street.

"Now of course," he says, his mouth in a small, spare smile, "I view the profession differently. It allows me to . . . slow down." No, he didn't really consider business. "There weren't any offers—though I did hear there were some people interested."

What he wanted to do most on leaving the directorship of the CIA two years ago, he has already accomplished. "I tried to do things in a certain sequence: I wrote a book. I signed up with a lecture bureau. I started a law practice." But the book, telling his side of a controversial story, was clearly first. "I just felt I had a job to do. I felt an obligation to put another view on the shelf alongside those of the critics. Sales was not my first motivation."

He tacks this last on. It has an odd, moral ring. He seems to know it.

The lecture circuit has turned out better than he might have expected, he says. Especially given a memory of the Colby hate posters that once hung on college campuses and subway walls. The posters, most of which appeared in mid-'73, after Richard Nixon named him Director, Central Intelligence, had a likeness of Colby superimposed on an ace of spades with a "Wanted" message underneath. The posters keyed to Colby's lead role in the notorious Phoenix program in Vietnam, in which at least 20,000 Vietcong cadremens were "assassinated," a word Colby still hotly contests.

About Phoenix, he says: "It was part of the program to identify the secret leadership of people who were, for instance, planting bombs in the marketplace—that sort of thing. So what do you do about them? Well, you try and capture them. It's always better to capture than kill—after all, you might get information. But if you can't do that, you have to kill them." But 20,000 people?

"Whoa. Whoa. How many hundreds of thousands were killed by artillery and bombardment in that war?" He isn't talking about soldiers, he says but about villagers, "about rockets into Saigon."

A moment later, cooled, he says: "I think the thing wrong with Phoenix is that people really don't know what it was. It became a buzz word, a symbol. It's a shorthand for everything bad that ever happened in Vietnam."

Again, his wry, almost pained smile. "Let's face it: I can go places now I couldn't get near three years ago." And then: "The main thing I've encountered lately is Iranian protest. A whole phalanx of students were up at MIT recently. They're mad over the help the agency gave the Shah in '53. Which I have absolutely no problem with, by the way."

He is asked about family, the sense of roots. There are four Colby children, three of them grown (a daughter, Catherine, died of anorexia nervosa and epilepsy in April 1973), a mother and father in their 80s who live in Washington. But Washington is home, he indicates, seeming suddenly on foreign ground, only by default. "I guess I don't really link to geography or roots that much. I was an Army brat."

Lunch at the Federal City. William Colby is a rigorous gentleman. He tries hard to grab every door. He insists you step from the elevator first, nudging you with an expansive arm. His suit coat, of course, is buttoned. (He unbuttons it only when he has sat down and spread a thick napkin on his lap.)

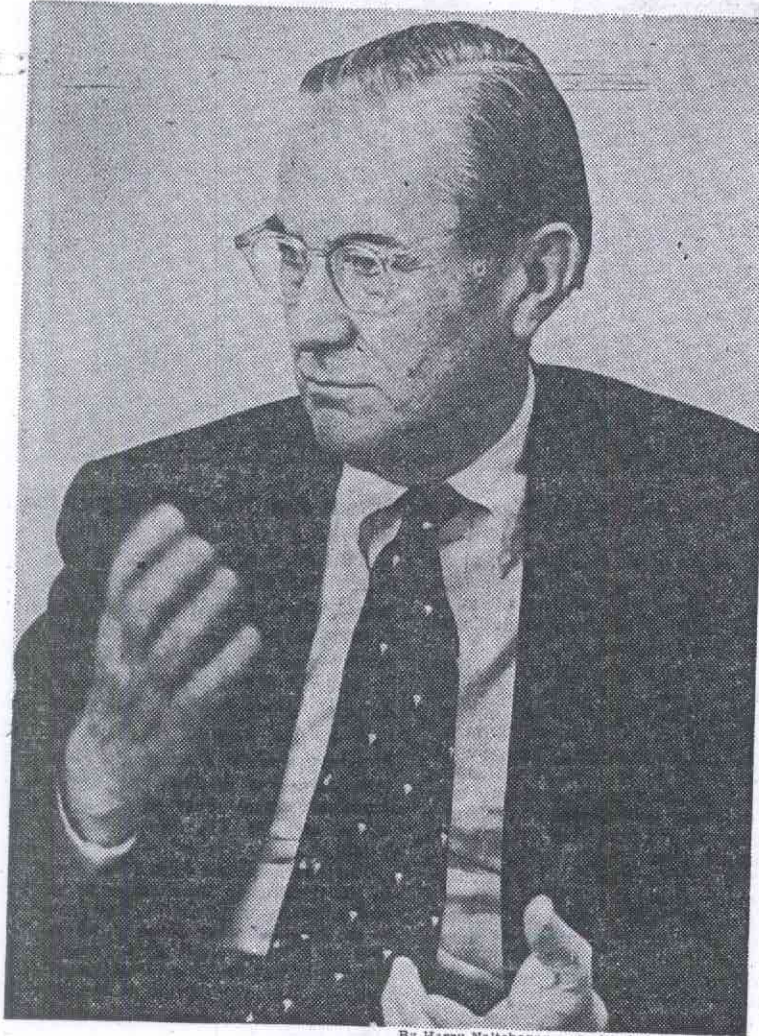
People who know him say this is standard Colby procedure. "Welfare for his own people is his longest and strongest suit," says Vint Lawrence, a Washington artist, once a CIA operative in Laos who worked for a year as a Colby aide-de-camp.

On the way across the street, in brilliant sunlight, a curious thing happens. A dizzy tourist recognizes him. "Oh, monsieur," she fairly cries. "Oh, madame," he fires back, not a whit nonplussed, wheeling to grab her hand, breaking into a broad grin. Out of earshot, he shrugs and says: "I haven't the foggiest who that was."

William Colby is no stranger to the public glare, even now. He has practiced his reactions.

He seems comfortable in here, amid Washington's upper crust of law and media. Seated now, a glass of dry white on order, he says, "The only thing I really miss is 'The Daily.' There were about 60 or 70 copies printed up and distributed to the top people. It came out like a newspaper,

Colby at Least the Posters



By Harry Natchayan—The Washington Post

Former CIA director William Colby

in tabloid, and had all the vital overnight international news. Believe me, it was good. Now I have to scramble. You saw that stack of magazines on my desk."

He decided when he left he would make a clean break. "I didn't want to hang around. I canceled my clearances. I haven't seen a classified document in two years." Does he ever run into any of the old boys? "Oh, I've

been to a few lunches. And I'm on one of these boards for former intelligence officers. That's all."

Since he doesn't bring it up, he is asked about the feeling attributed to many people still inside the company that William Colby is something of a public tattletale. A turncoat who gave up to congressional investigating committees delicious CIA secrets, among them the notorious 693-page list of the

Are Gone

"family jewels"—such tricks as the surveillance of journalists, interception of mail, drugging of unknowing CIA employes, assassination attempts against Fidel Castro, Patrice Lumumba, Rafael Trujillo. This, he says, is where the mole business probably got started.

At one point, recounted in his book, Colby was supposedly told by a derisive Henry Kissinger: "Bill, you know what you do when you go up to the Hill? You go to confession." "At another then-vice president Rockefeller, who chaired a blue-ribbon presidential commission, supposedly said: "Bill do you really have to present all this material to us?"

He knows the question has been coming. "We had to get the past out of the way. There was no other choice, I thought. There were just too many suspicions, mistrusts, screaming headlines. There were two divided camps on what our strategy should be, of course. The White House thought we should contain. I took a view I felt was guided by the Constitution. And my conscience. So I was willing to put up with the idea that my colleagues would one day hate me."

He quickly amends that. "Some of my colleagues. I'd be very content to go out to Langley today and defend what I did. I think I'd get a fair hearing."

There's more to say. He fidgets with a fork. "You see, it was inevitable that this whole total secrecy cult the CIA had enjoyed for so many years would one day have to be resolved. And I just happened to be sitting in the driver's seat when it happened."

He pauses here for a joke. "It's my theory that if you gave the Fish and Wildlife Service the mandates the CIA had all these years, they would have gotten in trouble, too."

It was fate then? Some cosmic egg that cracked in his lap? He frowns, already shaking his head.

"No. I don't believe there are great cosmic forces directing our lives. If you believe that, you are on your way to a sin against pride, 'the greatest sin of all,' as it says in a book I know pretty well."

Far from seeming chary on the subject, William Colby seems downright comfy talking about such religious matters as "sin" and its opposite, about the church fathers, about the tests you apply to see whether "the end justifies the means."

He doesn't attend mass daily, as the

rumor has it, he says. "Although I during Lent." His wife Barbara is the real devout Catholic of the family.

(In the book, he recounts stopping in a quiet church just before his wedding "to confess the lively bachelor life I had lived as a paratrooper for three years and resolved again to follow the Catholic discipline I had strayed from during the war." He won't elaborate. "Playboy was disappointed too," he grins.)

"Religion is the intellectual exercise that enables me to figure out my place," he says. "I approach it analytically. That woman fingering her beads on a stone floor in Mexico will probably get to heaven before I do — and have a higher place. But it's the only way I know."

Did he ever think of quitting back there, walking out when the heat was really on — no matter how much his religion fortified him? "No. I don't believe in quitting. I don't want to draw a lonesome cowboy analogy — after all, a recent president did that with disastrous effects, you'll recall — but I will admit there were times back there when there seemed no clear-cut front line between me and the enemy. I was getting it from all sides: the press, the administration, people I worked with. Some of them thought I was selling the agency down the river. 'What will I tell my children?' I'd be asked. But I never thought of quitting. I had my duty."

The small, clear, moral note — a defiant tinkling. He knows and grins.

His immediate plans are to get the practice going, he says. But then maybe he'll take some time off and sail up to the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi with Barbara. Sailing and bicycling (on the C&O canal) are his chief hobbies. Socially, he and his wife don't do much. "I've always worked hard." He seems embarrassed, a little awkward.

Eventually the conversation drifts again to theology—to the New Testament. The parable of the vineyard, and the laborer who came last, but reaped as greatly as those who were there all day, fascinates him, he says. He considers that, thinking aloud.

"After all, church teaching allows for the possibility that maybe no one is in hell." He lets it tail off.

You mean like Al Capone who reputedly confessed on his deathbed?

He loves that. The shoulders have dipped in a huge shrug. "Well, fair enough."