

TUESDAY, MARCH 23, 1978

Copyright © 1978 The New York Times

Of Secrecy in the C.I.A.

To the Editor:

Your March 17 issue states that I acknowledged that I was unable to learn all there was to know about the C.I.A.'s operations and contains a quotation from my forthcoming book, "Honorable Men," in a fashion which gives an erroneous impression. The quotation says that "for all my efforts I found it impossible to do much about righting whatever was wrong with Operation Chaos. "Its super secrecy and extreme compartmentation kept me very much on its periphery."

While these quotations are accurate, they follow a reference to me as former Director of Central Intelligence. As will be clear in the book, this quotation comments on an earlier experience before I became director. I had no difficulties learning what I wanted and needed to learn about Operation Chaos after I became director. The difference between the two periods is a result of the entirely proper practice of compartmentation of the agency's activities, so that certain matters are known only to a few individuals although they are available to the director.

W. E. COLBY

Washington, March 20, 1978